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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF THE MAJOR EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN ALBERTA 1936

by

Ⓒ A. JAMES GERWING

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Newspaper Accounts of the Major Educational Reforms in Alberta 1936 submitted by A. James Gerwing in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in History of Education.

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Date August 21/81

ABSTRACT

In 1936 Alberta's new government set in motion what many hoped would lead to significant changes in the province's social institutions. In what purported to be the beginning of a comprehensive plan to reform the entire educational system, the province introduced sweeping changes in the administrative structure, in the organization, the content and the delivery of educational services.

The social climate favored reform. The people of Alberta had been demonstrating particular concern that the schools were not meeting the perceived needs of society. In an effort to discover material evidence as to what the public opinion was in this regard in 1936, I engaged in a study of one primary media resource, the newspaper.

The material printed in the newspapers would provide data from which one could arrive at a reading of public opinion not only among the readership of a particular paper, but also of the public at large, for the editors and publishers would gear their material to what they believed the people were thinking.

The newspapers furnished the public with a great deal of information, commentary and opinion. News stories constantly reported on what was happening at each stage of the reform process. Controversies captured much attention. Editorial comments and letters to the editor provided lively debate on key issues. Re-

porters followed the principal actors to obtain their comments, supplying readers with the ideas of those closest to the reforms.

The wealth of material found, the number of articles, the content, the favorable placement, the quality, and the tone, all lead to the conclusion that the people of Alberta, if the newspapers are any indication at all, were aware of the reforms, were reasonably well informed and supported the general direction the government had set out on.

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INTRODUCTION

Many forces combined to make the 1930's an exciting decade in the educational history of Alberta. The year 1936 marked the most dramatic changes, for in that year the government enacted legislation reorganizing the rural units of administration, brought into effect a series of changes in school programs and structures, made provision for the further professionalization of teachers, and spoke of other significant measures to be taken toward the complete reformation of the educational system of Alberta.

These sweeping changes met with widespread popular approval. Robert S. Patterson, in "The Establishment of Progressive Education in Alberta", has established the prevalence of the public dissatisfaction with the whole system of education. Others also have undertaken studies of the period, the most relevant of which are found in the bibliography.

Most of these studies have relied on published sources, official reports and papers, government statutes and ordinances, personal papers and similar documents. Few have done more than a most cursory examination of the newspapers, and none have singled out 1936 for special attention.

This study is intended to give an accounting of the material the newspapers presented to their readers, and on the basis of the amount, the content, and the tone of those articles arrive at some conclusions regarding the existence and strength of popular opinion. It will thus contribute another dimension of material evidence toward the continuing study of the history of the people of this province.

I

BACKGROUND

A. Historical Setting

The year 1936 was a particularly bitter year of war, unrest, and economic dislocation. For the people of Alberta, the problems associated with the assimilation of large numbers of foreign immigrants had given way to unprecedented economic difficulties brought on by the depression and the drought. Most of the people felt or were aware of the effects of extreme poverty, unemployment, relief programs, and semistarvation. Families and communities experienced painful uprooting from long-held homesteads or the bitter isolation of such abandonment by their neighbors. Beaten by the sun, the wind, and by the land which had offered them prosperity a decade ago, they had difficulty finding and clinging to the smallest scraps of hope for better things in this land of tomorrow.

Youth particularly found scant reason for optimism. They could not understand, those who knew something of the reality of the situation in Canada, why such terrible poverty could exist in one part of the country when people in other parts were compelled to burn produce they could not market. Their idealism shattered, they were in great need of rescue.

Even the weatherman played the spoiler in 1936. Alberta established records of both cold in February and unbearable heat in July.

Yet, in this desperate situation, many dared to hope. In 1936 they found reason for that hope. They had just elected by a landslide a government headed by a man who promised change. In a most bewitching mixture of religious fervor, economic desperation and political naivete, William Aberhart, through his popular radio evangelism, showed the way to better days. While castigating the greedy money lenders of the East and plying followers with biblical injunctions, he married the little-understood political economy of Colonel Douglas to the evangelical spirit of his own Prophetic Bible Institute to produce an attractive formula for a more equitable distribution of the wealth of the land.

As both preacher and teacher, he saw education as an important element of social, political, and economic change. In this he did not stand alone. However, faith in the educational system as an instrument of change was not founded upon the system as it existed, but on the system as it would be reformed, not only in its administrative structure but also in its content and delivery. The momentous changes of 1936 in Alberta education, although certainly helped by the crisis experience of desperation brought on by the depression, grew from roots developed much earlier by educationists, by politicians, by civil servants, and by the general public.

The spirit of educational change had pervaded the United Farmers of Alberta throughout its tenure of office. Sensitive primarily to the plight of rural youth, the U.F.A. government, under

Education Minister Perren Baker, had introduced legislation providing for rural reorganization. Despite support from the department and the encouragement of legislative committees, the government yielded to the lobbying pressure of the school trustees, withdrew its amendments to the School Act and satisfied itself with experimental consolidations in Berry Creek and Turner Valley.

New theories of learning and new psychological studies set the philosophical backdrop for curriculum reform. Seventy-five teachers were piloting a program which the Department of Education believed would be Alberta's answer to the needs of its youth.

The combination of the effects of the depression and the general atmosphere questioning the suitability of the school programs established a climate of popular opinion favorable to the 1936 changes. Although the ideas for change, therefore, predate Mr. Aberhart's assumption of power, he took an active personal role in carrying out the changes at a tempo on a scale unprecedented in the history of the province. Because of this leadership, he, of course, took credit for the reforms, living up to his promise that he would change things.

The general public never waivered in its support for public education and the government's initiative in educational legislation. Progressive educationists, like H. C. Newland, saw education as having the potential for lifting society out of its unfavorable circumstances. The people of Alberta shared that hope, born of desperation perhaps, because they believed that the schools might very well be the only hope for youth.

The school trustees, vocal and organized, provided the only real opposition to the reforms of 1936. Aberhart gambled that they represented more the remnants of the now practically defunct U.F.A. than the new will of the people. Meanwhile the teachers were insisting, through the Alberta Teachers' Association, that they had been advocating these changes for a long time.

Deputy Minister George McNally announced the plans for curriculum and grade reform to the press in January, hinting that the effective starting date for all schools would be in September. The Speech from the Throne, in early February, expressed the government's intention to pass legislation amending the School Act to allow for rural reorganization. The bill was introduced and discussed in the House in mid-March and given final assent just before the session ended in early April. A handful of Social Credit backbenchers refused to vote with the government on this and on other pieces of legislation.

The decision of the Department of Education to implement curriculum and grade reorganization for all schools in the fall created an enormous demand for summer school classes for teachers wanting to learn the new methods.

Throughout the summer, city school boards wrestled with difficulties associated with the establishment of intermediate schools. Teachers' Conventions devoted most of their attention to questions related to the changes.

The 1936 educational reforms represent, in total, profound changes in delivery, and in school organization. No one connected in any way with education could have remained unaffected by these changes. Whether they understood the underlying philosophy, whether they agreed with the need for change, or whether they were merely curious onlookers, the general public of Alberta had reason to believe that their schools would be different after the fall of 1936.

B. The Nature of the Study

1. Statement of Purpose

The nature and purpose of this study is to examine the newspaper coverage of the educational reforms in an effort to discover whether that medium supports the contention that the general public was interested, knowledgeable and supportive regarding these changes.

Theoretically, if interest among the public was high, the newspapers would reflect this by the number, the length, the variety and the quality of the articles printed. The editor would place a goodly number of these articles in those parts of the paper where the readers would be most apt to see them. If interest was low, or deemed to be so, few articles would appear; those printed would be cursory and scattered about the paper more as "fillers" than as important news items.

If the public opposed change, the evidence should appear in the newspapers, either as direct attacks on government policy, or in consistently negative slants to news articles, headlines and editorials.

On the assumption, therefore, that the papers reflect the general attitude of the population, they will indicate to what extent the people of Alberta knew and accepted extensive educational reforms announced and instituted in 1936.

2. The Method of Study

The examination of the material took the form of a thorough reading of one urban daily, the Edmonton Bulletin, and a selective reading of the other three large city dailies, the Edmonton Journal, the Calgary Albertan, and the Calgary Herald. The Western Producer served to provide the rural perspective, while the Western Catholic furnished material for the Roman Catholic point of view. Each of these requires some additional comment.

a. The Edmonton Bulletin

The choice of the Bulletin as the chief source proved a happy one. "Alberta's oldest newspaper", as it called itself, provided its readers generally with a stable diet of relatively unbiased reporting. Its predictable format and regular features made it possible to find material without any more frustration than microfilm reading normally involves.

I paid particular attention to every news story, searched for comments in editorials, in letters to the editor, and in the work of the regular columnists, while not neglecting such special interest pages as the social page for indications of the activities of some of the principal personages of the reforms. I gathered only material as related directly to the reforms, ignoring all other articles dealing with education.

In general, the Bulletin covered the news stories well and thoroughly, made very few editorial comments, printed a goodly number of letters, but featured no regular column dealing with educational concerns.

b. The Edmonton Journal

The Journal made no secret of its dislike for William Aberhart, particularly when he attacked the press for "heeding the dictates of the 'money barons' with resultant 'false coloring' in dispatches" (EJ, Jun 1, p 1). When he threatened to legislate control of the press, the Journal (Jun 2, p 4) compared this to what was happening in Italy and Germany, saying that the people of Alberta would never stand for such foolhardy legislation. At least one reader took up the cause in support of the free press, saying that Aberhart's preaching was one-third mudslingling, one-third begging for money, and one-third patting himself on the back (Jun 16, p 4). He suggested that the press was doing Aberhart a favor by printing anything about him.

Nonetheless, the stories about the educational reforms received a positive press. The Journal seemed to have been totally sympathetic to the educational policies even while remaining less than enamored of Aberhart and his party.

c. The Calgary Albertan

The Albertan, Alberta's only morning paper, had been the only staunch supporter of Aberhart during the 1935 election campaign. In mid-January, the Social Credit party purchased the paper as its official organ, merging it with the Social Credit Chronicle. Aberhart was pleased to say, "I trust that all Social Crediters will avail themselves of the opportunity to establish an organ that will give them the news of the day from the citizen's viewpoint" (Jan 15, p 1). The editor that day proclaimed that the paper, "shall hereafter be definitely consecrated to Social Credit principles. . . . None but the blindly prejudiced" could fail to see the worth of the Aberhart government; and other presses in opposing him have done so with "illogical arguments and ulterior motives" (p 4).

With such a patent pro-Aberhart stand, it could be expected that the news and views printed would be favorable to Aberhart on virtually every question. Every Saturday a Social Credit Supplement detailed the activities of the various party organizations and offered for wider distribution lengthier stories on particularly important issues.

d. The Calgary Herald

Bitterly anti-Aberhart during the 1935 campaign, the Herald, had its own flavor. The A.T.A. Magazine of March, 1936, quoted Aberhart as having told the Herald, "You must know that the majority of the reading public consider the Herald, in its editorial policy at least, one of the weakest and most reactionary papers in Canada" (p 2).

Despite this open antagonism, the Herald, like the Journal, found itself supporting the educational measures without qualifications as to their content, finding fault only with the process and the manner with which Aberhart handled portions of the operationalization.

e. Weeklies

In order to obtain the rural point of view, I selected the Western Producer as having a wide circulation in Alberta and as covering much Alberta material even though it was published in Saskatoon. I paid particular attention to the editorials, to the regular columns and to the letters to the editor for evidence of the rural mind regarding the reforms. Although the introduction of larger units captured the most interest, the paper found room for material on the other reforms as well.

Roman Catholic educational philosophers generally took issue with progressive education, judging John Dewey's pragmatic materialism unacceptable to Catholics. Although the term "progressive education" was not always used to describe the Alberta curriculum reforms, neither could the connection be denied. Thus the question arose as to whether Alberta's Catholic weekly would come out against the proposals to introduce the enterprise system. I conducted a page by page review of the Western Catholic. As will become clear from the presentation of the material, the Western

Catholic dealt with Alberta education very rarely, and then for the most part to cover stories dealing with the protection of separate schools. An editorial comment on progressive education, quoted later on, dealt with the general rather than with the specific question.

3. The Nature of the Material

In a way, 1936 could be considered a newspaperman's dream. On the local scene, such sensational stories as murders, suicides, and house fires abounded. The depression created a constant stream of hardluck material in unemployment, relief, and the struggle to survive. Politically, the province was alive with stories of the first year of Social Credit government, the dispute between Aberhart and Colonel Douglas, the disappointment of not receiving dividends, and use of scrip to pay wages, and the difficulties of an inexperienced legislative assembly.

On the world scene, innumerable articles appeared on the Hauptman execution, while the British royal family provided the media with a royal death, an accession, followed quickly be an abdication, and a second accession to the throne. Wars in Ethiopia, Mexico, Asia, and Spain frequently demanded headlines, while Mussolini and Hitler attracted constant attention with their aggressive moves in central Europe.

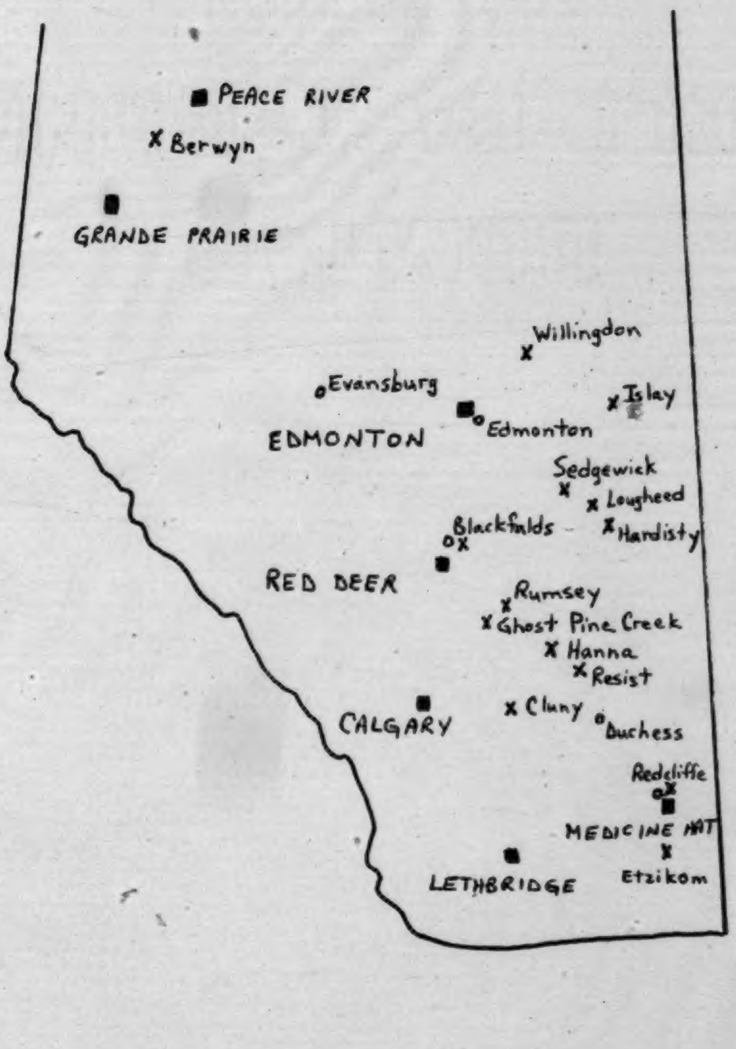
In the midst of such exciting news, stories about educational legislation could easily be lost, especially if those who made the decisions as to what was printed believed that their readers were not interested in such doings. On the other hand, if much material appears, or appears in prominent places, this would demonstrate the degree of interest and importance attached to the reforms.

In general, I found that the newspapers presented their readers with a considerable amount of material covering the educational reforms, going into detail on many points and repeating many of the central themes; thus, whether by direct design or not, they kept the issues and ideas before their readers. The four big city dailies carried articles of one kind or another about the reforms on the average every other day in the first four months of 1936. The graph below gives some idea of the number of articles being published.

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	Total
Calgary Albertan	7	18	4	11	40
Calgary Herald	4	22	10	11	47
Edmonton Bulletin	7	18	10	14	49
Edmonton Journal	10	16	10	7	43
Western Producer	4	9	-	-	

If these statistics indicate anything, they certainly indicate interest. Although the majority of these articles are news stories, the papers also published prepared statements from McNally, Newland, McKee, and others.

The vast majority of the news stories placed on those portions of the page that readers would look to first, the upper extremities on the right hand side on odd-numbered pages and the upper left on even-numbered pages being most preferred. Furthermore, a great many appeared on the first or third page and on the first page of the second section, showing the importance the editor placed upon these stories in relation to other news of the same day. A fairly high number of letters to the editor suggests interest, concern and some degree of knowledge. Of interest in that regard is the provenance of these letters. Of those which can be identified (many writers chose to remain anonymous) the vast majority came to the dailies from rural centers, as shown in the map below.


PEACE RIVER
Berwyn
GRANDE PRAIRIE
Willingdon
Evansburg
Islay
Edmonton
EDMONTON
Sedgewick
Lougheed
Blackfalds
Hardisty
RED DEER
Rumsey
Ghost Pine Creek
Hanna
Resist
Cluny
Duchess
CALGARY
Redcliffe
MEDICINE HAT
Etzikom
LETHBRIDGE

Editorial comments on the reforms appeared in every paper and the vast majority supported the reforms as presented. None of the regular columnists for the dailies made it his business to comment about the educational scene on anything more than the rarest occasion. The major figures in the reforms made the Bulletin's "Who's Who" and were mentioned on occasion in the social events.

The material published demonstrates a level of importance and relevance to the general public of the events and the people who were most instrumental in bringing about educational reform in Alberta. I do not claim to have found every article printed, nor do I make any judgment as to the accuracy or completeness of the articles published. What I looked for was the material evidence in the newspapers that the people of Alberta, as judged by the press, cared about what was being planned for their schools, and that they had some opportunity and perhaps even incentive to keep themselves at least partly informed about the direction the reforms were taking.

4. Method of Presentation

The material is presented in a logical rather than a chronological order. Quotations from the papers demonstrate what was being written about each of the educational reforms for the reading public in the way of news stories, feature articles, editorials, letters to the editor and other articles dealing with the reforms. After each section appear comments on the material presented.

Part II deals with the institution of larger units of administration. Part III presents material on the other major reforms: curriculum change, grade reorganization and the introduction of enterprise education. These have been placed together under one section because they are always presented together in the newspapers and because they are inextricably bound up with each other. Part IV presents two other reforms briefly. In the final part I attempt to draw together the principal conclusions and suggest several areas for additional research.

5. Limits of the Study

I have made no attempt to read any other paper as thoroughly as I did the Bulletin. For the other big city dailies I selected those days, weeks or months when material would be most likely to appear, based on the Bulletin readings. Nor did I study any of the town or small city newspapers.

Other media expressions, like radio or magazines or book material also fell outside the parameters of this study.

No attention was paid to the circulation statistics of any of the newspapers studied, how many were printed, how many sold, where the distribution was heaviest, what the characteristic of each one's readership. Such study, useful as it might have been, would not appreciably alter the kind of conclusion I have come to.

I made no comparison with other years. Again, it might have been instructive to do a comparative analysis to determine whether the 1936 newspapers carried an extraordinarily large number of articles on education compared to any other year.

Finally, I made no attempt to discover any stated editorial policy of any of the newspapers, or attempt to find out if the owners or publishers were imposing any restrictions. I doubt whether such a study would have contributed any useful findings.

6. Review of Literature

A number of studies were useful in providing the context of the 1936 reforms. Goresky's chronological survey presents the history of development in education into the 1930's, going into no great detail on any single issue. Figur studies the coming of progressive education to Canada, with emphasis on Alberta. He confines himself for the most part to the formal changes themselves rather than an analysis of the forces which brought about the changes or the reactions to the changes.

Killback and McCall cover the rural scene from the point of view of historians, telling the story of the development of rural high schools, bringing out developments for the most part after 1936.

R. S. Patterson's study on the establishment of progressive education in Alberta is still the most comprehensive analysis of the forces which facilitated the acceptance and the adoption of the reforms and the historical setting in which the reforms took place. He has followed up this work with a series of additional studies in a variety of formats, but essentially he has not modified his original work.

The study by Hodgson on the nature and purpose of the public schools in Alberta, while dealing with the reforms of 1936, restricts itself in the main to Department of Education documents.

In general these studies attempt to present the picture of developments as they happened, showing why and how changes took place.

Other studies single out more narrow aspects of the educational reforms. For example Hurt, in scrutinizing the Peace River movement toward rural community education, looks for the sociological forces at work in bringing about a practical realization of the philosophy of progressive education in a unified and comprehensive plan of education within a given social organization.

Barrie Oviatt's work on the papers of William Aberhart as Minister of Education presents opposition to the reforms of 1936 as confined for the most part to the mechanics of the reform and to rural reorganization, but finds no general refusal to accept the principle of change itself.

Patricia Oviatt studies the educational contributions of H. C. Newland. Although the work covers a broad time span, the material on 1936 shows Newland as essentially ahead of his time as a social reconstructionist sometimes frustrated at the lack of popular understanding of the philosophical principles underlying the profound changes taking place.

Donalda Dickie's book on the enterprise system in theory and practice is more a "how-to" book than an historical presentation of how the enterprise system came to be adopted.

None of these studies, nor any others I have encountered, have singled out 1936 for special study, nor have any of them made any great use of newspaper sources. Still, the present study strengthens the basic direction of these writers, adding another dimension to an ever-growing literature on Alberta education.

II

THE LARGER UNITS

A. Defining the Changes

Several thousand small units of school administration developed in Alberta as the settlers filled the land and made provision for the education of their children. In thinly populated rural areas the most common phenomenon was to have one school in each administrative unit. Each unit had its own board of trustees, a secretary-treasurer, and a fairly high degree of local autonomy over the hiring of teachers, and the provision of facilities and learning materials.

In 1936 amendments to the School Act intended to amalgamate the more than 3300 districts into somewhat less than 50. Although the number of units of administration would be greatly reduced, there was no intention, at least in the beginning, to close any of the schools. However, since the one-room school could not provide adequate high school education, the first obvious result of the larger unit would be the formation of consolidated high schools; but that lay in the future.

Although Aberhart was quoted as saying he did not intend to abolish entirely the position of school trustees of the small districts, but only to change their role into advisory bodies, it was pretty obvious that the vast majority of existing trustees would no longer act in that capacity after the enactment and implementation of the legislation because their powers would have been assumed by the trustees of the larger units.

B. News Stories

1. Announcing the Changes

In the first paper of 1936 the Edmonton Bulletin and the Calgary Albertan carried news headlines that William Aberhart intended to "revise the school system and enlarge school districts" (EB, Jan 2, p 3). It was front page news for the Albertan. The Bulletin zeroed in on the larger districts, stressing that Aberhart would keep the old boards as advisory committees for the larger units; the Albertan presented the most cogent arguments for the larger units: the savings to be realized from fewer secretary-treasurers and fewer audits; the better distribution of books and supplies; and the prompt payment of teachers' salaries (CA, Jan 2, p 1).

It was evident, then, from the first days of 1936, that major changes in education would occur. Not everyone would easily have seen the connection between the administrative reform and the curricular changes, or that the former would be a prerequisite to the latter. The Alberta Teachers' Association Magazine carried on the front cover of the January issue these words of Aberhart,

> We go forward now with a strong determination to bring about a betterment of conditions. Changes in the educational system are recognized as necessary in the interests of all concerned. Our problem now is to bring about those changes in such a way as to obtain the maximum cooperation from all those whose efforts are being devoted to the cause of education.

An article in the Edmonton Journal on January 2 (p 9) clearly indicated the relationship between other reforms and the establishment of larger units. The article quotes J. W. Barnett, spokesman for the A.T.A.:

> There is only one thing to say about the premier's plan for larger units of administration, and that is that it should be done. The Alliance (A.T.A.) advocated such a change several years ago, before it was taken up by the later government, and we still hold that the only hope for reform in education in this province is the establishment of larger administrative units.

"Less enthusiastic" was the phrase used for the response of Mrs. A. H. Rogers, secretary of the A.S.T.A.:

> I think that the principle of Mr. Aberhart's proposal is good and that it is a move in the right direction. That, however, is my own personal opinion, and I am not undertaking to speak for the Association, in which there is considerable difference of opinion on the matter. . . . There will be strong opposition among the people out in the country, and while I agree with the principle of the plan I am not too hopeful about it at the present time.

The strength of that opposition was most evident in the A.S.T.A. convention held in Calgary just before the opening of Legislature. If any difference of opinion resided in that body, those who supported Aberhart's plan stayed away from the convention. I will deal in more detail with the convention later. It is sufficient now to mention that all the dailies carried full coverage of the debates of that body, whose opposition was so complete that Aberhart appeared to weaken in his resolve momentarily.

2. The Legislation

a. The Speech from the Throne

Nevertheless, the Speech from the Throne announced the reforms in the following words:

> In no sphere is there more need of careful legislation at this time than in that of Education. The reduced revenue resulting in decreased grants has made the maintenance of the schools, both elementary, secondary, and University most difficult.
>
> These hardships have undoubtedly impaired efficiency in many cases, and have seriously handicapped the introduction of the New Curriculum so necessary for the progress and for the attainment of standards in keeping with the educational requirements of the times. Too many of the children of our Province have not had the opportunities for development that they should have and could have had without increased cost.
>
> My Government will, as soon as possible, institute legislation for the efficient cooperation and coordination of Rural Schools (EB, Feb 6, p 2).

The papers gave wide coverage to the MLA's who chose to speak, in the debates on the Speech from the Throne, on the educational plans. Members of the Government particularly spoke out in favor.

Mr. A. J. Hooke, MLA for Red Deer, did not wait for the opening of the house to fire a salvo for the larger units. Speaking in Sylvan Lake to a large gathering of party supporters, he pointed to the inefficiencies of the small districts where few children get beyond grade eight. He argued that the idea of larger units was not entirely new or untried, that it had been adopted in many parts of Canada, in B.C., in Quebec, as well as in twelve states of the United States. Letters were reaching him asking him to oppose such a scheme, but he said he could not, as a teacher himself, oppose something which he believed to be in the best interest of children (CA, Feb 1, p 2).

Rev. Peter Dawson, SC MLA from Little Bow, spoke in favor of the New School Act as "the door of opportunity whereby facilities may be supplied to develop the faculties and potential possibilities wrapped up in our girls and boys in rural districts, so that they have the same chance as the boys and girls in the larger centers" (EB, Feb 11, p 16).

Both Calgary papers picked up parts of Hooke's speech during the debate on the Speech from the Throne. He argued that the children in small rural districts "were not receiving the benefit from the system that they were entitled to" (CA, Feb 14, p 1).

The Herald printed other points he made as well: that the system was antiquated, could not provide services nor handle the costs; particularly in the small units teachers were not receiving their pay (CH, Feb 14, p 2).

Another school teacher, SC MLA for Whitford, William Tomyn, was given a great deal more space in the dailies on February 18. He provided somewhat more sensational material to attract attention. As well as arguing in the same vein as Hooke that the present system no longer served the purpose of educating youth, and that the "safest and most profitable investment" for the province was in education (EB, Feb 18, p 16) he saved his heaviest ammunition for the trustees. He could not understand why they would oppose measures which would provide equal opportunity for rural children (CA, Feb 18, p 2).

Alluding to the A.S.T.A. Convention earlier in the month, he said,

> We are not getting any support from the school trustees and never will, no matter how reasonable the question may be. Some of these trustees are hard-boiled politicians and give not a "hoot" for anything constructive. They usually have their minds made up before they get to their conventions; therefore it is being quite useless in presenting anything worthwhile for their consideration. . . . I say politicians because on my way to the city I met a number of trustees on the train and found them to be of various political affiliations, most of them being staunch Liberal or U.F.A. supporters (CA, Feb 18, p 2).

When J. J. Bowlen, Liberal member from Calgary, jumped up to object, Tomyn admitted trustees were of all party affiliations (EJ, Feb 18, p 4), but he went right on:

> I must admit I have a great respect for the majority of trustees - I have found them to be decent chaps; but some of them were such that if I did describe them here in this House, I would be called to order from the chair on the fitting use of adjectives (CA, Feb 18, p 2).

He pointed to the small number of delegates at the Calgary Convention, wondering why so small a group should dictate their policies to the provinces. He believed that the U.F.A. Government, in yielding to them, had "taught them a very bad habit" (EB, Feb 18, p 16), and that the present Government must not yield to them.

> At the moment, I want to say that the majority of the people in my constituency are behind the move as proposed by the Hon. Minister of Education, and to that effect I have with me resolutions urging that I give my whole hearted support (CA, Feb 18, p 2).

Mr. Tomyn also alleged that "many efficient teachers are dismissed for political or personal reasons" under the present system through the use of term contracts. "A hired farm hand has better protection." He saw a remedy for these situations as well as for low salaries in the premier's plan (EJ, Feb 18, p 11). "Let me emphasize at this point . . . that I am not fighting for the teachers' cause, but in general, for the education of our youth" (CA, Feb 18, p 2).

Tomyn's outburst provoked reaction among readers. A "Willingdon Reader" defended the trustees, challenging Mr. Tomyn to prove that the majority of the people of Whitford were in favor of Aberhart's plans. He reminded Tomyn that he (Tomyn) had himself earlier opposed the Baker plan. "I can assure Mr. Tomyn that the majority of the trustees in this constituency are against the plan not only on account of dictation but of doubling up of expenditures" (EJ, Mar 5, p 4).

S. A. Berg, SC MLA from Alexandra, presented the House with a more emotional argument:

> I implore you . . . do not leave a stone unturned to give our young people of the rural districts at least an even break with the young people of our cities, so that when our boys and girls of today have become old men and women of tomorrow they can recline in comfort and security and thank God for an Aberhart and thank God for a Social Credit government (CA, Feb 19, p 1).

The Edmonton Bulletin reported other sections of his speech wherein he stressed the twofold theme of putting rural education on a par with that of the city and bringing the system and curriculum up to date. "I firmly believe that the proposed enlarged school areas is a great stride in the right direction" (EB, Feb 19, p 9).

b. Introduction of Legislation, MLA's Speak

With a sub-headline of "Premier Introduces Important Legislation on Educational Matters" the Edmonton Bulletin offered its readers a lengthy news article on March 18, when, in his capacity as Minister of Education, Mr. Aberhart brought the long-awaited amending bill before the House for first reading.

Recognizing the far-reaching effect of the bill, the news story went into some detail.

> Consisting of no fewer than 20 pages of printed material, the bill is the heaviest piece of legislation brought down at the current session. Due primarily to the fact that the government members have caucused on the bill, there is not expected to be any great volume of speaking on it from government benches although it is known that several government back-benchers have indicated that they will have something to say when the debate is reached (EB, Mar 18, p 2).

The article goes on to describe the provisions for establishing school divisions consisting of a number of older districts, what the powers, duties and functions of the new school boards will be vis à vis the older ones. It indicates some of the sweeping powers to be given the Minister of Education in establishing the divisions and in delineating their boundaries as he deems "desirable in the interest of education".

The amendments include a provision that "the board of trustees of each school district included in the division shall cease to have any of the powers, duties and functions conferred upon a board of trustees under Sections 119 and 120 of the School Act" (Ibid.). The Calgary Herald carried the same news story, in the same details, and placed the story on the front page.

In the debates during second reading, opposition to the amendments appeared on both sides of the House. One Social Credit member believed Alberta education compared favorably with other provinces and wanted to push on with the establishment of Social Credit and only then worry about other matters. Others took exception to the broad powers granted the Minister of Education in constituting new divisions. John J. Bowlen, the Liberal House Leader, expressed "strong opposition to the bill . . . /because/ trustees were practically all opposed to it and a large percentage of teachers also opposed it" (CA, Mar 25, p 11).

Aberhart assured the House that he would apply the new bill to the province gradually, leaving out those districts which were doing well (Ibid.).

On the following day, with the headline "Little Objection New School Act", the Edmonton Journal article expressed surprise that the bill passed second reading so easily when it "had been expected to raise storms of protest" (Mar 26, p 9). Liberal Gerald

O'Connor wanted to give the divisional boards the power to appoint superintendents; Aberhart argued that at the beginning the Department of Education would have to pay them and until the system became functional he intended to appoint both superintendents and inspectors (*CA*, Mar 26, p 1). Nonetheless, he agreed to let it stand over for possible rephrasing; otherwise it would have been given third reading and royal assent at once.

"Almost as fast as chairman Lucien Maynard could read the numbers of the multitudinous clauses, the voluminous bill . . . sped through the committee of the whole" (*EJ*, Mar 26, p 9). The *Albertan* attributed this to Aberhart's personal piloting of the bill.

Before final passage, Liberal George Van Allen made one more attempt to prevent the Minister of Education from appointing superintendents, pointing out that this would never be permitted in cities, that, in fact, it would produce a "rebellion" if attempted in Lethbridge or Edmonton. But the premier again insisted it remain for the present and he had his way (*EJ*, Mar 31, p 9, *EB*, Mar 31, p 8).

c. Aberhart's Statement during the Debates

During the entire period of the session William Aberhart, as Minister of Education, made numerous public pronouncements on the legislation. His position as premier gave more weight to everything he said. The press provided the forum to carry his ideas to the public.

Just before the A.S.T.A. convention and before the opening of the Legislature Aberhart had tried to explain through the press to the trustees that if they would only take a better look at the proposals, particularly the financial advantages, they would not oppose the legislation (CA, Feb 1, p 1). In the SC supplement (p 1) the Albertan gave more details. "The proposed bill is practically the only way in which the new curriculum adequate for today's needs for rural students can be provided. The whole bill is a rural improvement education bill and is neither pro-teacher nor anti-trustee."

Aberhart tried to point out that "without adding to the total cost of education" the reorganization would provide a longer year for rural schools because schools would not be closed as much, would provide better equipment for schools, would eliminate the expenses of so many secretary-treasurers and audits, would improve school supervision, and would decrease High School fees while providing High School education where none was presently available.

The trustees' response at the Convention in Calgary will be dealt with later. Although Aberhart introduced the legislation over their objections, he told a delegation that approached him just before its introduction that he did not intend to produce a blanket plan and introduce it immediately over the entire province. He expressed confidence,

> that much of the opposition to the proposed plan was due to the fact that the numerous school boards throughout the province did not understand just what the government was trying to do. When the true nature of the proposals was absorbed by them, objections to the plan would undoubtedly be withdrawn (CH, Feb 18, p 1).

Members of the delegation, however, countered by indicating their fear that "their autonomous rights would be withdrawn", and that "if the government could assure the association that it was not the intention to deprive them of their rights, approval of the plan would undoubtedly be forthcoming" (*Ibid.*).

They asked the premier to postpone proclamation of the legislation for one year so that all the implications could be studied minutely by all rural boards. Aberhart would not concede. "If the proclamation was postponed for a year, it would prevent the government from carrying out its plan to place the scheme in operation in some areas for the purpose of ascertaining the value of the plan" (*Ibid.*).

The *Edmonton Journal* news article of the same day interpreted Aberhart's gradual implementation as "one or two at a time" (EJ, Feb 18, p 9), quoting him as saying "a few districts as an experiment."

The *Edmonton Bulletin* picked up a point regarding autonomous rights. The trustees objected that they would lose the right to dismiss teachers whom they considered inadequate. Aberhart countered that in his opinion boards were firing teachers not in order to get rid of a poor one but to hire another at a lower salary. When the delegation expressed concern about being stuck with an objectionable teacher through continuous contracts, Aberhart was ready. "For every teacher that might have caused a school board some trouble, I can name ten who have suffered at School Board hands" (EB, Feb 18, p 1).

The Western Producer, on February 13, made reference to an interview with Aberhart in which he stated that the new bill will be appreciated once it has been studied and known better. Opposition to it was simply opposition to cooperation between existing districts. The legislation would not increase the costs of education immediately, but when times improved, improved programs, schools books, etc., would be easier to obtain in larger units than in tiny ones (p 23).

d. Passage of the Bill

When the bill ultimately received final reading, the press hardly noticed. Mention of its passage was practically hidden within an Edmonton Bulletin article (Apr 4, p 11) dealing with the fact that some 78 bills had been passed in the session. The Edmonton Journal and the Calgary Albertan treated the story in the same way.

Earlier both the Bulletin (Mar 24, p 4) and the Herald (Mar 26, 30, p 4) had decried the speed with which bills were being railroaded through the assembly by the legislators, "with their eyes set on the calendar and their minds on the day of prorogation."

When the legislative session terminated, an Edmonton Bulletin news article (Apr 7, p 1) noted that 102 of the 114 bills brought down during the session had received royal assent. The bills represented "the most varied and most far reaching ever passed in the history of the province in one session." An editorial comment the following day (p 4) put the new school bill in the context of the contrast between the "feverish activity" of the new house compared to the "policy of drift" in the declining years of the previous government. The editor took no sides on any of the legislation beyond saying that action was needed on many of the bills and action was taken, some of it unique.

In contrast, the Calgary Herald editor found the session generally disappointing in that it found none of the promised Social Credit legislation. "The Alberta world has not been changed overnight because a Social Credit government is in charge of its affairs." The great flurry of activity was only to impress the electorate, the net achievement of the more than 100 measures was "inconsequential after the pruning process has been completed." The editor saw a dangerous trend emerging in a "definite attempt to introduce dictatorial government methods" and "administrative straight jackets" and found the "school master psychology" all too much in evidence (Apr 8, p 4).

3. Aftermath of the Legislation

a. Some Immediate Effects

Although some took exception to the move toward greater centralization of authority over education, opinion was "almost unanimous" in Alberta that the province should assume full responsibility for the costs of education, relieving the municipalities of the burden of paying close to 90 percent of the cost of primary and secondary education, and rectifying the discrimination between classes in the taxation of real property (EJ, Apr 10, p 4).

On at least one occasion Aberhart brought representatives of districts involved in new rural units to the legislative buildings to explain and discuss the changes (EB, May 7, p 2).

During the session ten Social Credit backbenchers, for a variety of reasons, had bolted party ranks and voted with the opposition. School legislation proved to be one of the divisive issues. One of the more dramatic defections was that of S. A. G. Barnes, who was also a trustee of the Edmonton Public School Board. The Edmonton Journal (Mar 12) reported a clash between him and Aberhart over government plans to reduce grants to city school districts. Barnes had also attempted at an April meeting of the Edmonton School Board to press for a provincial "superintendent of organization" to assist local boards in instituting reforms, and to have the province pay for it.

Through the summer Barnes, who was also opposing, unsuccessfully, superintendent McKee's plans to implement organizational changes in the Edmonton Public School System, was in trouble with the Social Credit party for his refusal to answer for the position he had taken on dividend registration. On July 24 he was formally ousted from the party, presumably for his outspoken and public dissention from the party line. The Bulletin pointed out that Barnes had expected to become Minister of Education (Jul 25, p 13). This may well have been at the root of his quarrels with Aberhart. It is entirely conceivable that Aberhart had more people in mind than trustees when he spoke to the A.T.A. Convention in Calgary about opponents to his amendments to the School Act as "prejudiced, misinformed, and unreasonable" (EB, Apr 15, p 2). At least one reader believed that Aberhart had been most tolerant and that Barnes's arguments were simply "piffle" (CA, Aug 5, p 4).

b. Exceptions to the Legislation

One school board at least found a way to protect itself from inclusion in the plan for larger units. "As a result of being in touch with the Department of Education", Mr. T. J. Braems, Chairman of the Erskine School District, was able to inform a meeting of the ratepayers that Erskine would be excepted. The district had experienced savings and was using the extra funds to increase salaries for the secretary and the janitor (EJ, Jan 15, p 17). By acting quickly before the legislation came about, this district secured a government promise to be left untouched, and therefore avoided the need to react later to a *fait accompli*.

Roman Catholics had become somewhat anxious over the potential loss of their right and ability to maintain separate schools under the provisions of the proposed changes in the School Act. Changes in boundaries of jurisdictions would certainly affect their interest, as they had learned earlier in Saskatchewan. A delegation led by Msgr. Leo Nelligan, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Edmonton, and Lucien Maynard (SC MLA, Beaver River and deputy speaker), representing the Edmonton Separate School Board, met with

Aberhart for two hours. The proposed draft, they told him, "did not contain all the provisions which had been expected on the preservation of the rights of separate schools in rural districts" (Western Catholic, Feb 26, p 1). The premier assured them that "full protection to the Roman Catholic and French minorities, under the provisions of the B.N.A. Act, would be preserved in the new School Act" (EB, Feb 25, p 8). Mr. Aberhart made the same assurances during the debates in the house (EB, Mar 31, p 8). This protection for minority rights in Alberta contrasted with the Ontario reaction to Premier Hepburn's proposal to give separate schools a larger share in corporation taxes; his life was threatened! (CH, Apr 9, p 2).

c. Implementation

It did not take long before the process of amalgamation began. Not surprisingly, the first to be prepared to move were southern areas which had seen the advantages in the Turner Valley and Berry Creek experiments. The Picture Butte district reported conditions favorable to the proposed changes (CA, May 28, p 4), and by early June the Lethbridge inspectorate was planning to put together between 50 and 75 districts into a single administrative unit. Inspector O. Williams pointed out the advantages to be gained in terms of educational services to the children through a more equitable distribution of taxable wealth (CA, Jun 6, p 4).

Cardston was the scene of a meeting on June 18. Interest ran high as the Hon. N. E. Tanner pointed out that more children would have access to a high school education and better health services. Inspector Gibson pointed out that the political aspect of the question was over and it was time to put the act into effect. The new district there would be made up of 58 school districts in 5 subdivisions, each of which would elect one board member. Meanwhile, the local boards would hand over all their assets to the new district and surrender their power to hire and dismiss teachers, while retaining their responsibility over furniture and equipment. The Department of Education would appoint a superintendent (CA, Jun 23, p 4).

From then on it was only a matter of a few short years before all the old districts disappeared in favor of the larger units. The process was generally carried out without overmuch fuss. Newspapers in the fall of 1936 carried material on the elections to the new school boards.

Not every district cooperated even after their inclusion into a larger unit. For example, Foremost refused to elect a trustee on November 12 to the divisional board. Alfred F. Honner of Etzikom explained why in a letter to the Herald on November 23 (p 4). MLA A. Flamme and Inspector MacGregor had, in the spring, left them with the impression that all "resolutions opposing the act had been treated as chain letters and thrown in the waste basket". When the movement to refuse to elect began to take shape, the government sent MacGregor out to chair a public meeting. People believed he would "close the meeting if things got troublesome", and elected some one else to chair the proceedings.

Votes revealed that 67 were opposed to the larger unit and only 17 in favor. A motion not to elect a board member passed with an even larger majority. Even though A. Flamme in the spring had attempted to explain the new act, he "never said a thing" at the fall meeting in defense of the act, said Mr. Honner.

C. Public Meetings

The pending legislation on larger units was the subject of a variety of public meetings. A sampling of newspaper reports of some of these meetings reveals that some groups came out in favor of the proposals and some were adamantly opposed. Without exception, the meetings expressing greatest disapproval were those organized by or representing school trustees.

1. Favoring the Changes

In the month of February, when the issue reached its greatest public discussion, Social Credit groups (most of them rural) reported in the Calgary Albertan SC Supplement (Feb 8, pp 5-6) expressed favorable reactions to rural reorganization. Again on February 22 the Supplement carried reports (p 5) of continued support in rural Social Credit groups for the larger units. Certainly this would provide some evidence, however, tinged with party bias, for the remarks made then and later that the trustees opposing the changes did not truly represent the will of the people.

A headline reading "Labor Urges Changes in School Act" on page 1 of the February 17 Calgary Herald announced that "individual members of the executive of the Alberta Federation of Labor are in favor of the proposal of the government to amend the School Act to provide for enlarged school districts." During their meeting with Aberhart and the cabinet, the premier must have been heartened when he asked the delegation whether it was in favor of the proposal, and "there was a chorus of 'yes' from the members . . . /indicating/ that Labor men favored the plan".

High School principal P. R. Brecken spoke to a Kiwanis gathering on the need to grant options in Alberta High Schools, which have "not kept in step with movements for developing education" (CA, Feb 21, p 10). General as these remarks are, the context could only be in support of the changes before the legislature.

One large organization which took a strong stance in favor of the larger units was the Alberta Teachers' Alliance, both at its provincial level and at the local level. The Lethbridge local, for example, endorsed the bill because the "new plan would give the rural child a chance for a better education with improved facilities" (CA, Feb 21, p 1). Provincial spokesman, Mr. John W. Barnett, although admitting some misgivings, told an A.T.A. convention gathering in Calgary that,

> the execution decided that it was a grand and opportune moment for making a most forward step in education in the province, and therefore decided that the soundest way to deal with the question was to endorse wholeheartedly . . . and offer no criticism which might be calculated to endanger its chances of passing (CA, Apr 14, p 9).

Speaking to the same group, Mr. Aberhart found an audience sympathetic to reform legislation his government had enacted. Amid applause he charged those opposed as "obdurate and unreasoning" and as not knowing "what they were talking about" (CH, Apr 15, p 16). His deputy minister, G. F. McNally, considered the opposition of the trustees based not so much on the possible loss of their authority as on the fear that the scheme would cost them more money (CA, Apr 16, p 9).

A public meeting at Waskatenau emerged from debate on the larger units somewhat ambivalent in its endorsation of the plan with the proviso that "full democratic control is guaranteed the parents and taxpayers residing in each enlarged unit" while the meeting was opposed to "any change in the School Act which might interfere with the entering or terminating of contracts between teachers and school boards" (EJ, Mar 11, p 3).

2. Opposing the Changes

There could be no doubt regarding the stand of other public meetings. Egg Lake protested consolidation (EJ, Jan 23, p 5) as did the ratepayers of Bruce (EJ, Mar 4, p 3). In the strongest language the ratepayers of Dunstable condemned the plan for larger units.

> With everything so uncertain and the fact that it does not take very much forsight to see that this new idea will bring about largely increased taxation at a time when the taxpayers are looking for relief instead of added burdens . . . we must decidedly request to be left alone to look after our own school affairs (EB, Feb 15, p 3).

None of these districts seem to have followed the perspicacious lead of Erskine already referred to above.

3. The Alberta School Trustees Association Convention

From the beginning, throughout the debate, and even after the legislation was passed, the Alberta School Trustees Association expressed most bitter and vociferous opposition. That the members did not share the view of Secretary Mrs. Rogers quoted earlier is evident from a monitoring of some 25 meetings of school boards during the month of January. Twenty-four expressed strong and pronounced opposition (EJ, Jan 31, p 14).

Before the Calgary Convention, Premier Aberhart circulated a pamphlet pointing out the weaknesses of the older system and cited reports of "investigating committees in other provinces, which strongly favored the larger unit, pointing out that it was not only more economical, but resulted in better education facilities for rural children" (CH, Jan 31, p 9). The Convention was also to hear reports from Professor A. E. Ottewell of the University of Alberta and from D. C. Bayne, secretary-treasurer of the Calgary local, favoring larger districts as a means of improving financing and equalizing costs (Ibid.).

Before the convention opened, it was already apparent that more trustees than usual would attend, and that most were prepared to fight the larger units, a few would request postponement for a year, and still fewer favored the scheme. Districts opposed the scheme because they were convinced that larger districts would increase administrative costs, that divisional boards would not watch expenditures closely, that too much power would be placed in the hands of a few administrators, that adequate education depended more on good teachers than on district size, and that rural Alberta could sustain no further increase in taxation (CH, Feb 3, p 9). Those asking for a year's postponement argued that separate schools could use the time to prepare protection for their rights, that the wholesale institution of larger units would be unfair for districts presently out of debt, that the plan had not been submitted to the people, and that "when the social dividends are paid the school's financial problems will have disappeared" (Ibid.).

Whatever thelogic of these arguments, cool reason did not rule the evening of February 3, when Aberhart addressed the gathering. Although the members afforded him a "good hearing" while he outlined the intentions of the government, few seemed to believe him when he declared that he was not reviving the old "Baker Bill" or that there would be "no interference with district trustees or their autonomy as provided in the School Act"; nor could anyone take seriously his "If there's anything I stand for it's decentralization of authority" (CH, Feb 4, p 10).

For a full hour trustees jumped up to challenge and question, frequently forcing Chairman T. O. King to call for order. High feeling produced such statements as a remark that country roads were impassable and children could not be transported more than a mile or so. Aberhart himself at one point promised that no district would be compelled to come into the scheme, while at the same time admitting that not all the details had been drafted.

The session did put forth some direct and fundamental questions. One delegate wanted to know if the government intended to proceed with the plan regardless of trustee opposition. "Maybe. We don't want you fellows to have all the say," was the Premier's reply (Ibid.), provoking outbursts from all parts of the auditorium. Thereupon, he threatened that if the trustees continued to show opposition there would be little chance of reopening schools already closed.

Charged with rushing the plan, Aberhart declared, "We're not rushing it. You've been talking it for five years, and you don't seem to be getting any closer to it" (Ibid.).

In its report of this session the Calgary Albertan presented a somewhat different picture. While the Herald had summarized Aberhart's arguments fairly enough, the Albertan presented for its readers some of the punch behind his address. For example, he said some people have their minds made up before they hear a proposal; he hoped that would not be the case here. He made reference to a somewhat similar meeting of farmers in Ontario, who clearly demonstrated more interest in their hogs and cattle than in raising their children; again, he hoped that was not the case here.

The Albertan also quoted some of the statistics Aberhart used to back his assertion that rural education had deteriorated. For example, 1726 Alberta school age children had less than 20 days of school, 4944 less than 2 months, and 9035 less than 3 months (CA, Feb 4, p 9).

On February 4, the trustees dealt with the motion "Resolved that we fully endorse the proposal made by the Honorable William

Aberhart, Minister of Education, to establish 43 or 45 school districts in the province to replace the 3325 that now exist." A packed assembly wrangled for an hour over technicalities, amendments, questions of order and procedure. The newspapers reported no substantial debate. Both the Herald (Feb 4, p 1) and the Journal (Feb 4, p 1) recorded rounds of applause greeting such remarks as, "Mr. Aberhart evaded every question we asked him last night," and "After hearing his explanations last night, I for one don't trust him". The result of the vote, announcing that less than half a dozen of the 700 trustees voted in favor of the motion, brought most of the delegates to their feet, cheering.

A. E. Ottewell, in his report on rural education, suggested cooperation with the new curriculum being tried in a few schools, and was reduced to promising to bring before the convention a substitute plan for the improvement of the administration of school districts (CH, Feb 4, p 1).

The premier was obviously shaken by the overwhelming defeat. The Herald carried a banner headline on February 25 proclaiming "Premier Favors Hoisting School Bill" (p 1). While he left himself the opening of allowing the caucus to have the final say, he expressed his willingness and that of the cabinet to delay the plan for one year in order "to educate people further on the purpose and effect of the bill" (EJ, Feb 5, p 1). The Herald quoted him as saying he was unwilling to go against the interests of the majority affected.

This announcement and the proceedings of the A.S.T.A. Convention sparked a series of editorials and letters to the editors, which will be dealt with below. The February 6 Western Producer carried a brief news item on the A.S.T.A. Convention (p 1) but refrained from comment until the Saskatchewan trustees voted larger units down by 800 to 1. In the final analysis, Aberhart listened more to the arguments of the party backbenchers, to the editors, to the people who wrote letters, than to the trustees. When he spoke to the A.T.A. Convention in Calgary he explained, "They remained obdurate and unreasoning . . . so we passed the bill notwithstanding" (CH, Apr 15, p 16).

D. Editorials

Without exception the editorials written about the plan for rural administrative reorganization supported Aberhart, even though a few acknowledged they understood the stand taken by the trustees.

In the Calgary Herald's first paper of 1936, the editor commented on Perren Baker's failure, and then went on:

> The minister of education, himself an experienced educationist, now proposes reform. In his effort he can count on the Herald's support, just as this paper supported his predecessor in office. It remains to be seen to what extent the rural mind has changed in the interim or, if it hasn't changed, how much bolder the new government will be than the old in determination to achieve its objective (CH, Jan 2, p 4).

The editor of the Albertan was certain that Aberhart would do what Baker failed to do, for he had the majority in the house as well as acting "in the sacred name of public economy". Although it was evident that Alberta had too many school boards, it was understandable that the trustees would close ranks to oppose amalgamation despite its obvious merits, for they "will not willingly sacrifice their rights and privileges including the hiring and firing of teachers at whim" (CA, Jan 3, p 4).

The Journal editor of January 23 (p 4), seeing the connection between the rural reorganization and the introduction of the new curriculum and the new technique in teaching, asked Aberhart to use the full weight of his new government and his large majority to effect the larger units before introducing curriculum and method reforms. He should not stop half-way.

> The opportunity before the provincial government is unique. It should do a complete job of educational reformation while it is at it. Modernization of the curriculum without modernization of administration and finance would be a mere pouring of new wine into old skins. If there is to be an educational revolution in Alberta, let it begin with the very foundation of the system, its administration.

The A.T.A. Magazine categorically insisted that the "forces of ignorance and reaction are organizing themselves to defeat the new School Bill" (Feb, p 1), and devoted its editorial concern toward supporting Aberhart. More politely, the editor of the Albertan assumed that the trustees were lobbying against the scheme in the same manner as they had done under Baker (Feb 1, p 4).

The A.S.T.A. rejection of Aberhart's plan produced this blast from the Albertan:

> We have never quite been able to understand why rural school trustees cling so tenaciously, so jealously, to their trusteeship. . . . It is not a lucrative office. . . . True, it does clothe the trustee with the apparel of a little authority and confers upon him some parochial notoriety but have we, the taxpayers, to foot the bill for these nebulous benefits? (Feb 5, p 4).

The Journal again told the premier that if he and his government were convinced that the act creating larger units was good, they should use their authority against the will of the trustees. The old government had yielded to trustee pressure, instead of standing by its own proposals. The plan should be put to the test in the legislature and nowhere else (EJ, Feb 5, p 4).

The Herald castigated Aberhart for his failure to make the proposal attractive to the A.S.T.A., "whether he was unacquainted with the details of his own scheme, or had not given his address sufficient preparation. . . He became badly tangled himself, a fate that has dogged many a speaker on technical subjects." The editor sympathized with the trustees' fear ofhigher taxation, and "it would be unfair to them to suggest that they have not the best interests of the children at heart. . . . So far as their autonomy is concerned no one can criticize them for wanting to preserve it. There is already much government by board and commissions -- of that they are persuaded" (CH, Feb 5, p 4).

Just after the A.S.T.A. convention, Aberhart had announced his willingness to delay the plan for a year. Yet, the Speech from the Throne declared his intention "to institute legislation for the efficient cooperation and coordination of rural schools". Both the

Journal and the Herald jumped on him. "Mr. Aberhart . . . would have been well advised to have made sure he could put through the changes in the school system that he desires before urging their adoption" (EJ, Feb 7, p 4). "The Speech refers to a bill to consolidate the school districts as if it is to be presented. It was understood from a statement of the premier previously that the proposal was to be given a year's hoist. Therefore it might properly have been ignored in the Speech from the Throne" (CH, Feb 7, p 4).

The Bulletin, which did very little editorializing on education, briefly commented that it seemed the premier was going "to walk softly" on the business of rural school amalgamation (EB, Feb 7, p 4).

At his first opportunity to refer to the situation, the editor of Western Catholic reminded Aberhart that he would go the way of all politicians who promise and do not deliver, if he does not institute the scheme. Meanwhile the editor called on readers to give him a fair chance and to offer only constructive criticism "unimpaired by any party bias, and prompted solely by solicitude for the welfare of the province and its people" (WC, Feb 12, p 6).

The Western Producer, having waited for the outcome of the Saskatchewan trustee vote, made comments that could be applied to both. "It was . . . surprising and disappointing to have the convention so summarily dismiss all resolutions dealing with the question of larger units . . . What discussion there was indicated . . . a great deal of misunderstanding and some confusion" (WP, Feb 27, p 6).

By that time the Herald editor was again ready to take up the cause. The unfriendly reception of the proposal by the trustees "should not be taken too seriously". Although they were able to kill the Baker Bill, Aberhart could succeed.

> The present system of small, self-contained trustee boards has outlived its usefulness and a plan more economical and more efficient must take its place. In resisting this progressive movement, the rural trustees are out of touch with present day opinion all over the world (CH, Feb 29, p 4).

Toward the end of the debates in the House, when it was apparent that the bill would pass, the Albertan came back to the comparison between the successful action of the trustees in blocking Baker's plan and their failure to cow Aberhart:

> Mr. Aberhart was not to be intimidated by the bluster of school trustees. . . . There is ample evidence not only that the new plan will be more economical but that, whatever a great many trustees thought of it, the Government had the public, in their roles of parents as well as of taxpayers, behind them (CA, Mar 26, p 4).

After royal assent had been given to the amendments, the Bulletin expressed satisfaction that needed action had been taken (EB, Apr 8, p 4). The Herald editor was not impressed, citing Aberhart's failure to make "any startling pronouncements regarding the educational system of the province" (CH, Apr 14, p 4).

E. Letters to the Editors

Despite the fact that the news is what it is, editors can be selective and can slant stories to project their own point of view. Editors sometimes have to abide by the policy of the paper as defined by its owners, but, even if allowed freedom, they exercise a certain degree of circumspection, rarely allowing themselves the luxury of taking an indefensible stance on controversial matters in their editorials. But those who write to the paper feel bound by no fetters, can express themselves with complete abandon and can hide behind pseudonyms and anonymity if they so choose.

The letters regarding the formation of the larger units, though not as numerous as on other disputatious elements of the new government's policies, divided almost evenly between those in favor and those opposed. Most of the identifiable letters came from rural readers. The Calgary Albertan and the Edmonton Bulletin, although both carried letters almost daily, had few letters during the most critical period between the announcement of the legislation and royal assent. The vast majority of the letters in the Calgary Herald expressed opposition; one could speculate that they took exception to the editorial support of the scheme, but none expressed such a motive. Twice as many letters to the Edmonton Journal supported the legislation as opposed it.

1. After Announcement of Legislation

"Oldtimer" was the first one into the field, as he speculated:

> The robbery of the school trustees of their highly valued privilege of hiring and firing the teachers will be one bone of contention, but a much bigger one will be getting the older settled districts to bear any of the burden connected with the cost of carrying the schools in the sparsely settled and poorer districts" (EJ, Jan 3, p 4).

Although he contended that the costs of the small districts were not prohibitive he wrote that

> anything that will assurethe children who are scattered so far over our province . . . a more practical /education/ would be worthy of our legislative assembly. Also . . . anything that would save the teachers the ignominy of not being able to pay their board bills and having to try to borrow money to pay their fares home would be well worthwhile (Ibid.).

Another "oldtimer" agreed, but believed that the real trouble lay in the taxation structure, in the laxity on the part of those collecting, and especially in the unwillingness to pay. He honestly believed that if taxpayers had the choice between a school and a dance hall, they would choose the dance hall (EJ, Jan 13, p 4).

Charles E. Harding of Lougheed contributed a long letter to the Bulletin (Jan 25, pp 4-5) outlining the reasons for his opposition. Although he admitted that the system was far from perfect, he argued that the costs would definitely be higher, citing examples in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; he further argued that local democratic control would be lost, referring to a department official who had much earlier admitted that the department wanted more control.

2. About the A.S.T.A. Convention

In preparation for the A.S.T.A. convention, "Nemesis" wrote a blistering attack on trustees:

> That the proposed changes in the School Act will meet with considerable opposition at the forthcoming trustees' convention is a foregone conclusion. Do rural school trustees today represent the consensus of opinion of parents in rural areas? Theoretically they do. Actually they do not. At times one finds . . . men of high intellectual ability and others with sound common sense . . .
> However, very often one also finds men railroaded in of the most stupid and ignorant type, who appear to seek office for the sole purpose of lording it over their neighbors. . . . They insist on having their own bullheaded way in everything. . . . Too often this element dominates school boards and will put up a tough fight to prolong their period of imagined glory. . . .
> On the surface it will appear that no one wants the act changed. That this unfortunate state of affairs has been permitted to exist for 30 years, to the detriment of millions of children, . . . is little short of a national disgrace. It's up to every MLA to come clean, do his duty . . . (EJ, Jan 31, p 4).

An "ex-rural trustee" from Calgary spoke out against the larger units.

> It looks to me like a smoke screen hoisted to try to divert attention from the main issue. Why don't they come across with some of their pre-election promises . . . instead of springing new boomerangs. . . . The local school boards are quite capable of taking care of their own school districts without any new-fangled ideas of modern statesmen (CH, Feb 4, p 4).

Another person, "C. Y.", also contended that the trustees at the convention did not represent the parents of the children attending rural schools, but only their own opinion. He argued that the Social Credit study groups organized in most constituencies really represented the majority of the parents (EJ, Feb 7, p 4).

R. W. Callison of Cluny wrote that he knew why the trustees were so opposed:

> The answer is contained in a resolution . . . passed . . . at Calgary. "That our executive be instructed to watch the government and see that it passes no legislation curtailing or abridging our authority." Now, fellow citizens bear down hard on these two words, "our authority" (CH, Feb 12, p 4).

He went on to suggest the appointment of a committee of "outstanding rural educators - experts, not school trustees," to make practical suggestions and ensure that the government proceed with its revision.

"Common Sense" took up the cause of the trustees, pointing out the problems to be encountered if children would be forced to go greater distances. Snow made roads impassable in winter and mud in summer. Furthermore

> The jibes directed at trustees of rural schools are uncalled for and unjust. They give splendid, unselfish service. . . . It is an unremunerative position, and they are elected by the ratepayers 90 percent of whom are parents of children attending school (EJ, Feb 17, p 4).

A "parent" replied that "Common Sense" was "all confused and tangled up between consolidated schools and consolidated districts." Fewer schools were not being contemplated in the reorganization (EJ, Feb 21, p 4).

Cal P. Calvin of Sedgewick offered some interesting insights into the dynamics of the Calgary Convention. Rather than blame trustees for playing petty politics, as members of the legislature were doing, these same members ought to look nearer home for at least some of the responsibility for the "fiasco". By circulating a pamphlet beforehand and scattering broadcasts of a plan that would have come before the convention from its own executive, possibly referring to Ottewell's and Bayne's reports, and by not informing himself well, Mr. Aberhart, so Mr. Calvin believed, lost the support of "hundreds who supported the government only a few weeks ago" (EJ, Feb 25, p 4).

"Pedagogue" had written to the Western Producer expressing dis-belief that so many trustees could be against the larger units. Since they are generally the "best citizens" of a school district, this does not augur well for education. Perhaps trustees were only opposing larger units to oppose teachers. "It seems they fear they will lose their dictatorial power to lord it over the teachers and make their lives miserable." He went on to plead the cause of the children. "Would you not like to see your children get the advantage of public and high school education in a well equipped school, taught by efficient teachers, the children themselves becoming efficient members of society and enjoying their life to the full?" (WP, Feb 6, p 26). Ignoring Pedagogue's reference to the economizing effected in the two Alberta experiments with larger units, a reader categorically stated that boards simply had insufficient money to go into the larger units (WP, Feb 27, p 26).

Yet another participant of the convention, Mr. O. Vogstad of Redcliffe, offered some perspective on what happened. Far from being afraid of losing their power or undervaluing the benefits that could accrue from bigger units, the trustees voted so unanimously against Aberhart's scheme because they were appalled to learn "how immature and incomplete the plan really was. It aroused at once a bitter opposition from the rural trustees as well as the urban" (CH, Mar 7, p 4). They received no satisfactory answers to their challenge of the premier's statement that the larger units would reduce costs. Mr. Vogstad concluded

> It is satisfactory to know that the premier will let the new school act be deferred until the 1937 session of the legislature, which gives people time to think it over and plan it better (Ibid.).

3. While the Bill was in the House

A number of readers attempted to use the newspaper to bring pressure on the legislators while the School Act amendments were before the House, particularly if they disagreed with the plan or if they feared the bill might be postponed or might not be passed at all.

"Nemessis II" paid tribute to Perren Baker's efforts but dis-liked the way Aberhart was "stealing his clothes while bathing because he /Aberhart/ sees a badly neglected house needing many repairs." He concluded, "If the government sees that a certain law is for the benefit of the people as a whole, then it should pass that law" (EJ, Feb 18, p 4).

"Anti-Social Credit" minced no words:

> So the "educationists" of the province of Alberta have spoken and we are to have no change in our school system. It is to be regretted that Mr. Aberhart is going to "back up" at the behest of the trustees' convention . . . It would . . . be enlightening if we knew how many school districts spent $25 or more in sending a trustee to Calgary to vote, as they put it, for the welfare of the school children of the province and pared to the bone the amount of school supplies asked by their teachers this fall.
>
> Those of us who do follow trends . . . realize that the larger unit is essential if we are to have for our rural children even a share of the educational advantages considered the right of children living in the cities . . .
>
> Why not bring home to fathers and mothers the fact that the present system is not equipping young people to meet the problems of the world into which they must step tomorrow, and that that indictment alone sweeps away all justification for its existence (EJ, Feb 12, p 4).

Although provincial politics may have spelled the defeat of Baker's school bill, "The Onlooker" urged Aberhart not to be so shackled. "I feel certain that if he were to present the bill at this session, the support he may lose from disgruntled school trustees would be greatly offset by that gained from the grateful parents of rural school children" (EJ, Feb 17, p 4).

That the A.S.T.A. was actively at work to pressure the government by holding public meetings of ratepayers to secure their support against the proposed legislation is evident from a "parent" letter to the Albertan. It reads, in its entirety:

> I attended a special School District meeting a few days ago. It was typical of many that are taking place throughout the province.
>
> The resolution that is being circulated to all School Districts by the A.S.T. association was read.

> Several distorted opinions and hostile statements were voiced by the trustees and non Social Crediters.
>
> The advantages outlined by the Provincial Government of the proposed changes were not read at all.
>
> Several parents requested information re proposed change andits effect upon the intellectual development of the children, but could not get an answer, except, that what was good enough for our fathers is good enough for our children. It's all a taxing scheme, a graft, etc., etc.
>
> Vote called; result "decidedly against any change." The whole thing would be amusing if it were not quite so tragic.
>
> Now the question is - are our M.L.A.'s going to lend their ears to this vocal minority, who through their organization make a majority of noise and thereby repeat the spineless debacle of the U.F.A. government, or stand by the unorganized parents and give their children a proper education and make them fit to take their places as men and women of their race.
>
> Action, immediate and honorable is demanded. He who hesitates is lost (CA, Mar 25, p 4).

There is an interesting fictitious scenario of such a meeting in the April 11 supplement of Calgary Albertan (p 2). Summarized, the story went as follows:

The meeting opened with the Board Chairman's view that what was good enough for previous generations was good enough for the kids of today. But, even though no need existed for these "newfangled" ideas, he would throw the meeting open for discussion in order to arrive at a strong resolution.

"Boozy Bill" thought farmers needed no education similar to what city folk got. "Sandy Squeeze" opposed the new ideas because the board would lose "autonomous rights". When asked what they were, he did not know, "but them words was used at the convention and must be important." We have to run schools as we please, hire teachers as cheaply as possible and fire them when they don't do as told.

"Mr. Knowsit" liked the idea of a good education but the board could not afford it. The government should do it. All education should be free, paid for by the government and "not us taxpayers".

"George Lazee" felt that the scheme simply intended to put a bunch of our teachers out of a job and put higher paid ones in their places. "Bob Sloutch" framed the resolution to oppose larger units, saying if the board loses its power and authority people would no longer respect them.

"Mr. Wise" rose to plead the cause of children in a revolutionary new world, which demanded new responses in industry and in farming. Every child should have a chance at a good education as needed in a world that has changed.

Despite her husband's repeated attempts to hush her up, the chairman's wife finally delivered a fine oration on the dreams of her children and the dreams all mothers have for their children. She would vote against the resolution and urged others to do the same.

Only the trustees voted in favor of the resolution to oppose the amendments to the School Act.

Many letters expressed opposition. C. G. Bible of Ghost Pine Creek warned Aberhart that he would lose rural support over his bill just like the U.F.A. did under Baker. What about the Social Credit principle of decentralization?

> However, I feel that the main dissatisfaction over the new School Act will arise from the very fundamental idea of lessening parental control of child life in the rural areas. . . . It would appear to some of us that the evident haste of the government in rushing this thing through before the people have had time to discuss it fully flavors a little of Fascism. A plebiscite of the rural population would turn it down as decisively as the present government was elected (CH, Feb 18, p 4).

E. O. Hahn, Berwyn, raised a series of objections to the legislation: consideration for the distance small children would have to travel to school, taxes, and the migration of school inspectors southward during the winter! (EB, Feb 18, p 5).

A rural trustee from Turin objected to the name calling by Hooke and Tomyn in the legislature. In his opinion trustees read more than teachers. That useful piece of information was followed by this emotional appeal:

> If Mr. Aberhart is going to make a bed of roses for the teachers because he is one himself and at the same time walk roughshod over the trustees who represent the ratepayers, thereby making taxes so high we shall lose our homes that we have worked to build for many years, then I say there is going to be a trek to Edmonton instead of Ottawa, because people will not stand for it (CH, Feb 26, p 4).

A Willingdon reader (quoted earlier) also defended the trustees against Tomyn, challenging him to prove that the majority of the people in the Whitford constituency favored the introduction of larger units (EJ, Mar 5, p 4).

The debate went back and forth. A reader, identified as "One for a Change", wrote from Hardisty:

> It has surely been good to see letters from those who are in favor of it. And I may be counted with them. I am an old-timer in this country, practically growing up with it and my family has done just that and no more. For after all what has our rural school system offered in the past and even now only a grade eight education for 90 percent of them. I do not know of a lower standard anywhere here in Alberta than we are giving our farm youth today. Verily making of them hewers of wood and drawers of water for the nation. Surely they have a right to an even break with urban children, and an opportunity to enter other walks of life if they so wish. . . . I am sure that if the trustees realize just what they are doing by opposing the larger school unit they will abandon their stand . . . and will support the findings of their own committee and come out whole-heartedly for a high school education for the rural child. The change is long past due. And it is to be hoped that Mr. Aberhart will initiate the change. It is to be regretted that at a Liberal meeting in your city they decided to oppose the school bill on the grounds it would upset things too much. . . . Come now you Liberals don't play small politics (EJ, Mar 18, p 4).

From Islay, an ex-reeve of Berry Creek MD 214, W. Lloyd Brown, wrote that the Berry Creek experiment was not as successful as Aberhart implied, nor were all areas of Alberta the same. Particularly, he felt that removing the power from local trustees while leaving them responsible for some things would be unacceptable. "To expect the local boards to handle all the 'grief' without any power over the teacher or the taxes . . . is, in my opinion, ridiculous" (EJ, Mar 18, p 4).

Three days later he was back in the Letter Box, expressing his fears that Aberhart's proposals would eventually lead to the building of expensive buildings with elaborate equipment inaccessible to the average farm pupil.

> With all its faults the present system has served us well, under pioneering conditions. Our local boards are drawn from the parents of the district. They serve gratis, and are, in the main, faithful and efficient. To suggest that the board of the enlarged district will be of superior calibre is an uncalled for insult.

About local control, he wrote:

> We all know from experience that the larger the corporate body the more difficult it is to exercise real control /over expenditures/. If a local board becomes extravagant it is promptly checked by the ratepayers, but what chance will the ratepayers have over a board controlling from 65 to 100 schools?

A Blackfals parent contended that consolidated schools would mean only "stalled busses and cold children during our severe winters, and more unemployed teachers" (EJ, Mar 21, p 4).

In small districts, wrote Fred S. Warren, pressure exists to put the child of the School Board chairman ahead of the other children. "The question before Alberta is not whether the teacher will board with Mrs. Grundy but whether the children of Alberta will receive more efficient instruction in the future . . . The enlarged district is a step in the right direction" (EJ, Mar 26, p 4).

At leat one reader felt the reform was not going far enough. L. M. Aker of Rumsey urged that the government establish only one district, the whole province, and have the Department of Education pay all teachers' salaries and hire all local administrators. The local outcry would have time to subside before it became necessary to hold another general election (EJ, Mar 4, p 4).

Following the A.T.A. Convention in Calgary, Ruth Hursfield of Hanna, took J. W. Barnett to task for his remarks about school boards not paying teachers properly. No trustee, she said, wanted to see teachers go unpaid. She went on to speak of the larger units, expressing fears of what it might do to teachers. Would heads roll if they did not "render lip service to Social Credit?" Will teachers of Conservative, Liberal or Socialist tendency be able to keep their jobs? (CH, Apr 29, p 4).

F. Regular Columnists

As far as I could ascertain, no paper carried a columnist who commented regularly on educational matters. However, during the month of February, some references appear.

J. S. Cowper, who wrote a daily feature on the editorial page of the Edmonton Bulletin, made reference to the larger units only once, saying that Mr. Aberhart would be able to do anything he pleased with the large majority in the House, and "with the press and the public of the province almost solidly behind him" (EB, Feb 6, p 4).

The Western Producer's F. R. Bolton outlined the economic advantages to be gained from the larger unit, using the example of Kerrobert, Saskatchewan. A rather complete survey of 29 schools confirmed his view that many advantages, besides administrative and financial, follow reorganization (WP, Feb 6, p 13).

In a section devoted to "The Week With The Alberta Farmer" the Calgary Herald published a regular column by the "The Observer". On February 15 he devoted half of his space to the discussion on the new school bill, coming down solidly in favor of it; "so long, however, as the fate of such measures rests on the decision of a convention of school trustees, I see no hope of their adoption." Trustees have an interest not only as taxpayers but as those whose power could be lost.

The province must do more for rural youth, most of whom at present have no chance to get the level of education they need.

> I do not believe the adverse decision of the school trustees convention is necessarily the voice of the people on this subject. So far as I have been informed the question has never yet been taken direct to the people. I have heard of no school trustee elections in Alberta where the premier's plan has been made the chief issue or where it has been clearly explained to the electors.

If the government should decide to delay the bill for a year, care should be exercised to explain it to the people. "Fairly explained to them I do not believe they would turn it down" (CH, Feb 15, p 26).

G. Commentary

The newspapers of the two major Alberta cities carried a considerable amount of material on the amendments to the School Act permitting the government to proceed with the formation of larger school units, a reform of immense proportions administratively. From the number of news stories, the quality of the editorials and letters to the papers, I can only conclude that the people of Alberta were neither indifferent nor ignorant about these reforms, whether in the intentions, the details, or the likely consequences. A constant stream of material kept readers who wanted to be informed abreast of the developments.

Generally, the news stories gave readers reasonably complete information. Despite the general opposition of the _Herald_ and the _Journal_ to Aberhart and the Social Credit movement, their news stories and headlines did not differ appreciably from those of the rather aloof _Bulletin_ and the intensely pro-Aberhart _Albertan_. Although details of the news covering the same event differed from paper to paper, the selectivity seems motivated by impulses other than any intention to sway readers toward one side or the other. The papers reported the debates in the House as well as the results of many public meetings.

Examination of pages reveals that readers would find the majority of the news stories on the first page of either section one or section two, or on page three. All of these are considered favored spots. Furthermore, most of these articles appeared near the upper right hand part of the paper, the place most easily and naturally read. That position indicates importance in the eyes of the editor for his public.

If such a reader existed who read all the main newspapers, he would have had access to most of the significant and relative information about the larger units. I believe a faithful reader of any one paper could have gleaned a reasonably complete set of facts on the reform.

The editors, in including so many stories of the reforms, evidently judged their readers to be interested, to want information, and to seek it in their newspapers. Many of the stories possessed their own intrinsic interest in being either controversial or unusual. The press followed Mr. Aberhart, much to the chagrin of those who dis-liked seeing him receive such "free publicity" for his views.

All the editors took the view that the reforms were not merely inevitable but desirable. The arguments generally adduced presumed an aware and informed reading public. It is outside the realm of my study to attempt to judge how large a percentage of the general public those readers represent.

The letters sent in to the paper also demonstrate an interested public, not always completely informed and certainly not dispassionately detached from the issues. Sufficient letters appeared in most papers to warrant the conclusion that a goodly number of people of Alberta did care and did possess a general knowledge of this most significant educational reform. The level of debate, not always academically high, was lively, passionate, and sensitive to the major ramifications of the issues.

The high incidence of letters from rural areas shows that at least some of the rural population was reading the city dailies, reading being one of the less expensive means of occupying leisure during the depression. The interest demonstrated in the one rural weekly I examined shows that the editor of the Western Producer also considered the educational reforms relevant and interesting to his readers.

Although the larger units affected mostly the rural school districts, the editors would hardly have printed so much material only for their rural readership. They considered that material of interest and relevance also to the urban population, whether out of inherent news interest or because the process of passing this legislation demonstrated how the new government was tackling major issues.

III

CURRICULUM REFORMS

A. Defining the Changes

The second major educational reform introduced into Alberta in 1936 involved changes which the general public could perhaps not grasp as easily as the more visible administrative changes. The institution of larger units was only a means to these reforms. Concern that the children of Alberta were not receiving adequate training for the times led to sweeping curriculum changes that proved to be more drastic than the usual cyclical revisions made every ten to twelve years.

Although I do not propose to separate these changes in my discussion of the newspaper stories, the major components of the reform cover three areas. Revisions in the curriculum to include more electives and to alter existing course content intended to provide Alberta youth with the knowledge and training required to fit them into a world that had changed drastically. Major concern centered on rural youth and the need to bring them out of the clutches of the depression, for their situation was deplorable compared to their urban counterparts.

Secondly, the reforms called for organizational changes to abolish the grade system in favor of the division system. In response to the findings of child psychologists and learning specialists, this change would eliminate herding children along at a uniform pace, allowing for greater individual differences in learning rates. As a natural consequence of this revision, fewer departmental examinations would be given.

The crowning glory of the reform was the Enterprise System. Touted as Alberta's own unique expression of Progressive Education, Enterprise Education attempted to give children more than the "activity" and "project" programs, by demanding a strictly disciplined method of study, planning, and completion of an undertaking or "enterprise" while half the school time would still be taken up with the traditional subjects.

This section will attempt to show how much and what kind of material on these reforms reached the pages of the newspapers, and through them, the reading public.

B. The Leaders of the Reforms

1. Educationists

The activities of the various progressive education societies in Alberta are not reported in the dailies. The profound impact they made in educational circles and thence to the process has been outlined by Patterson and others. But the papers do follow the sayings and doings of some of the more prominent figures in educational leadership in Alberta. Most often quoted are Deputy Minister, G. F. McNally; Supervisor of Schools for Alberta, H. C. Newland; and writer and Normal School teacher, Donalda Dickie.

a. G. Fred McNally

G. Fred McNally, the Deputy Minister of Education, received excellent newspaper coverage on January 22 as the major dailies gave prominence to his announcement of the "revolutionary new school plan" for Alberta. The Edmonton dailies provided their readers with long articles, going into considerable detail on the reforms, both of them placing the articles on the first page of the second section. The Calgary Herald gave the story front page prominence with a series of dramatic subheadings like "Eliminates grades" and "Bans exams".

The cabinet had approved the changes, which now required only a ministerial order to put them into effect. As outlined by McNally, the plan "calls for elimination of examinations up to grade nine; elimination of the grade system; establishment of an 'intermediate' school between elementary school and high school; and radical revision in school curriculum" (EJ, Jan 22, p 9).

The changes would "probably" be compulsory for the rural schools in September, while city school jurisdictions would make their own decisions as to what extent they would adopt them.

McNally dealt with each of the components of the changes in some detail. Speaking of the introduction of the Divisions, he said, "Grade lines will disappear entirely in the first division, be discerned dimly in the second, and shade off into a system of credits in the intermediate schools" (EJ, Jan 22, p 9). He pointed out that Calgary had been experimenting for some time with intermediate schools and would be submitting a report to the department by Easter. In the later years of schooling "the program must be flexible enough to meet equally well the needs of all the young people now thronging the secondary schools: the young man destined for life in the workshop, garage, grocery store or farm, as well as the man destined for the university or a learned profession (Ibid. p 17).

When he spoke of the enterprise system, McNally stressed the shift "from pupil-listening to pupil-participation".

> Under the new system children in the elementary schools will organize themselves into "committees" under the direction of teachers to pursue studies in other than "skill" or factual subjects such as reading, numbers, writing, spelling and drawing.
>
> "Enterprises", broad topics which give room for study of several different subjects, will be set by the department of education, and the teachers, organizing the pupils into committees, will supervise pursuit of the various subjects which can be related to each enterprise . . . And when one enterprise is exhausted, another will begin (Ibid.).

The combination of enterprises and divisions will mean that "each child will be properly adjusted in every phase of the work he is trying to do", "where he can get the most from the instruction offered" (Ibid.).

"It is realized that the translation of this plan into actual practice will mean a near-revolution when compared with our present system" (Ibid.). Balancing the revolutionary character of the announcements, McNally pointed out that these changes had been the object of study for several years and that current experiments with both enterprises and intermediate schools would be studied by the Department.

When he spoke of the new curriculum to the urban section of the A.S.T.A. convention in Calgary (CA, Feb 6, p 2), no controversy erupted, probably because the debate on the larger units preoccupied the trustees. In his memorandum to all the school boards, Mr. McNally again outlined the changes, announcing that all the rural schools would adopt the changes up to the grade 9 level but that a complete introduction of the intermediate and high school would have to wait until the fall of 1937 and then would be brought in gradually (CA, Jun 2, supplement).

The deputy minister appears to have been quite busy on the speaking circuit, explaining the Alberta reforms to a variety of community groups. Among his major audiences was the Women's Institute. He asked his listeners to cooperate in bringing about the reformation of the educational system of the province. He stressed that the result of the reorganization of the grades would be "that children would at all times be working with others of equal ability" (EB, Apr 9, p 6).

On May 27, at a noon luncheon at the Macdonald Hotel, McNally addressed the Men's Canadian Club on the scope of Alberta's educational reform, which would give Alberta "one of the finest and most up-to-date systems of education in Canada".

> The new system of education will provide an activity program with greatly increased pupil responsibility; 50 to 75 divisional and town and city boards employing expert superintendents and enjoying a freedom of administration entirely impossible at the present time; a comprehensive scheme of teacher selection and training; a revised and reform system of taxation; an adequate program of library service; a province-wide program of adult education; and some comprehen-

> sive plan of scholarships for deserving and needy students (EB, May 27, p 2).

On July 3, the Edmonton Bulletin's regular feature "Who's Who in Edmonton" presented Mr. McNally to its readers, giving his life statistics, his education, his hobbies and what clubs he belonged to. McNally was referred to as being "interested in uniformity of education to which matter he has devoted considerable time and energy" (p 11).

Speaking to the Kiwanis Club, Mr. McNally drew a lengthy article on September 29 in the Bulletin. "One of the prime faults of Alberta education has been that after we have had young people under our influence for 10 or 12 years, they go away and thank heaven that that at last is over, thinking they are educated, and neglect their studies ever afterwards." He told his listeners that by the time people realize their mistake, it is usually too late to remedy the defect that has been ingrained into a habit.

He shared with the Kiwanians his dream of a day when all citizens would be able to study what appealed to them and receive certificates based on success in optional studies. He used the enterprise system as an example of such a change in education direction. He further urged the necessity of strengthening library facilities toward the advancement of culture through reading (EB, Sep 29, p 2).

Another group that heard McNally on educational reforms was the teachers of the Lamont Inspectorate at their annual convention. He spoke of the enterprise system while three of the teachers of the area demonstrated what it could do (EB, Oct 8, p 6).

b. Dr. H. C. Newland

Another prominent educationist whose name appeared regularly in connection with the educational reforms was Dr. H. C. Newland, one of the foremost proponents of progressive education in Alberta and a leader in the Education Society of Edmonton.

On February 15, the Edmonton Bulletin and the Calgary Herald reported at some length on the annual report of the Department of Education tabled in the legislature. Both quoted an identical portion of the report in which Newland spoke of the socializing value of the reforms:

> The new general program recommended by the department is built on the principle that education is a social experience in the course of which pupils plan, initiate, and carry out cooperative projects. The motivation of the pupil is strengthened and the classroom work is vitalized through a variety of activities which replace the verbalism and repetitive book-learning procedures of the old course. The new program, however, makes greater demands on the ability, initiative and resource of the teacher (CH, Feb 15, p 3; EB, Feb 15, p 11).

The Bulletin noted on April 3 (p 6) that Newland would be speaking that evening to the High School section of the local A.T.A. on curriculum reform, and the following day (p 8) reported that some 100 teachers had gathered to hear him.

On April 4, Newland revealed "startling changes in the educational set-up" (EJ, Apr 4, p 15). He was announcing details of the new system of replacing grades with divisions, stating that the new program for the elementary schools would be ready for the fall and would contain outlines of subject matter, objectives and levels of achievement expected for grades one to six.

Grade nine would be removed from the high schools wherever possible and intermediate schools would be introduced wherever a school jurisdiction had sufficient students to manage a 7 to 9 grouping in charge of one teacher. Rural schools would be excluded by this provision.

In the lower grades enterprise teaching would be encouraged, but would not be compulsory. At the high school level the new program would be introduced for grade ten in September 1937. Departmental examinations would be greatly reduced to having them only for grades nine and twelve, when comprehensive examinations would be written for grading by the Department.

Evidently teachers became nervous when they read of these sweeping changes, for they had seen no new outlines for the proposed courses of study. In the May issue of the A.T.A. Magazine, H. C. Newland was given two pages (6-7) to issue an official bulletin from the Department in which he explained the reforms for the teachers, promising revisions containing full descriptions, summaries, objectives and grade level attainments "at the earliest possible date, probably by the first of July" (p 6).

The entire enterprise procedure would be outlined in detail, and although not compulsory, "all teachers will be expected to make a beginning, at least, in the use of this procedure by attempting one or two Enterprises during the year." He promised that a complete course in Enterprise Education would be offered at summer school. In the future, the A.T.A. Magazine would carry regular official bulletins from the Department.

Newland recognized the importance of teachers in whatever success would follow the institution of the reforms. When he spoke at a gathering to honor Normal School veteran teachers, he commented, "Never [has there] been a time in the history of Alberta when members of the teaching profession had such a great opportunity before them" (CA, May 16, p 13).

c. Donalda Dickie

Donalda Dickie devoted her entire life to education, and figured strongly in the process of instituting educational reform. Her primary role lay in teacher education in provincial Normal Schools. Her tireless efforts in preparing for the changes by travelling all about the province in 1934 with her cohorts, Olive Fisher and William Hay, and by securing volunteers to pilot the enterprise system in 1935, along with her writing, made her the greatest authority on enterprise education.

She did not attract a great deal of interest in the press in 1936, yet the social column periodically mentioned her presence at functions in the City of Edmonton. When she addressed the Women's University club on February 8, the Edmonton Bulletin reported her ideas at some length, prefacing it with "Dr. Dickie is one of the foremost leaders in Canada in the study of the revision of curriculum and school teaching methods, and her experiments are attracting interest and comment wherever they are known" (EB, Feb 10, p 6).

Stressing that education should prepare the pupil for life, Dr. Dickie pointed out that such qualities as initiative, imagination, self-reliance, judgment, and the power to cooperate can only be developed by experience, by practice, by doing things. Because he cannot possibly carry in his head all the information needed to cope with the world, the student must learn to know where to find the facts.

On those premises, Donalda Dickie explained the enterprise system, and the article faithfully reported the salient features. In enterprises

> the children must work together, each contributing his share, they must plan, organize and carry them through; to do that they must get information, organize it and apply it to their needs. In working out these enterprises they get practice in, development in, those very qualities which we have seen lacking in the individuals, in the nations today (Ibid.).

On July 8, the Bulletin published a picture of Donalda Dickie with a lengthy article under "Who's Who in Edmonton." She is presented as one who "has put a slight but singularly effective shoulder behind any progressive education movement in the educational world" (EB, Jul 8, p 6). Readers could learn that she was one of the central committee in charge of the detailed planning of the new curriculum to be introduced in the elementary grades and that she was engaged during the summer to teach a class of more than 200 at the summer school which had attracted over 2000 teachers to learn the new methods.

The article goes on to detail her accomplishments as a writer and as a student, ending with an account of her life and her interests outside the field of education.

d. Other Educationists

Other educationists were quoted in the press at regular intervals. A sampling of the comments printed in news stories will reveal that readers, through these stories, had constant reminders of the educational reforms being put into practice.

Speaking on the topic "why reorganize education in Alberta?" to a gathering of the Optimist Club, M. E. Lazerte, from the University of Alberta School of Education, outlined details of the new divisions and the advantages to be gained by the emphasis on pupil activities in the first years of schooling (EB, Apr 2, p 2).

The Calgary Albertan (Apr 6, p 14), quoted F. G. Buchanan, Calgary School Superintendent, as he declared that the "revised program of studies . . . is far better instrument of education, . . . a needed change." He pointed out that Calgary and Edmonton teachers had been working on the changes for years, perhaps in order to make it clear that the reforms had been planned carefully and thoroughly before the "sudden" announcements.

Dr. D. C. Wallace used the occasion of the announcement of his leaving his position as president of the University of Alberta to expound on theories of education similar to those underlying the 1936 reforms. Educators must pay attention to emotional as well as intellectual development if they would train individuals to full participation in the life of society (EB, Jun 13, p 11).

Teachers' Conventions, which will be treated later on, provided occasions for many leading educators to speak out publicly on their views, and their remarks to teachers were reported in the papers. Thus the names of school superintendents, department officials, A.T.A. personnel and university professors were brought to the attention of the public frequently. (Cf. EB, Oct 9, pp2, 10; Nov 5, p 5; CA 13, p 9). The meeting of the Canadian Educational Association held in Regina called forth large headlines as delegates from across the country heard reports that the new trends so evident in Alberta were general across the land (EB, Oct 20, p 3).

e. Observations

The point of this section is that through the newspapers the general public could have become aware of the names and the views of those prominent educators who masterminded the philosophical bases of the reforms. They did not appear so often that their names would be household words, but frequently enough that regular readers would recognize them. Their titles and their positions would have told the public something about the power and influence they would have. Others like William Hay, M. E. Lazerte, J. W. Barnett, D. C. Wallace and C. Sanson, although not as frequently quoted in the newspapers, provided additional weight in that not one of the prominent educators of Alberta, so far as I could determine from the news accounts, spoke against the reforms. Thus people would get the idea that all those who "knew best" supported the changes. This evidence of the intellectual climate of

Alberta provides grounds for saying that one essential for massive societal change was definitely present.

2. Politicians

The political representatives of the people of Alberta can be said to reflect the general tendency of the thinking of the people. Although some members of the Legislative Assembly believed that other problems demanded more attention than the educational woes of the province, none were reported as speaking out against the reforms as such. Few, if any, of these political figures had much to do with the background work of initiating the changes. Their expressions of support, although not frequently reported, lent an air of official sanction to the reforms.

a. MLA's

The Speech from the Throne made reference to the plight of Alberta Education suffered through decreased grants of the previous years. Citing the need for "careful legislation", the government said:

> These hardships have undoubtedly impaired efficiency in many cases, and have seriously handicapped the introduction of the New Curriculum so necessary for progress and for the attainment of standards in keeping with the educational requirements of the times. Too many of the children of our Province have not had the opportunities for development that they should have and could have had without increased cost (EB, Feb 6, p 2).

I have already quoted part of William Tomyn's debate on the Speech from the Throne. He prefaced those remarks with "our school system is out of date. . . . A great difference in educational opportunities exists. . . . It is high time that we did something. . . . How long are we going to tolerate such conditions?" (CA, Feb 18, p 2).

S. A. Berg of Alexandra echoed these sentiments. "It is high time that we bring our school system and school curriculum up to date. . . . We are trying to solve a twentieth century problem with an eighteenth century system. That is an impossibility" (EB, Feb 19, p 9).

Although he was speaking on topics other than education specifically, Provincial Secretary E. C. Manning told the Edmonton Kiwanis Club that the time for change was upon Alberta. "There is no reason why Alberta shouldn't lead the world in progress in the near future" (EB, Jun 9, p 8).

An out-of-province politician, Miss Agnes MacPhael of Ontario, was quoted by the Edmonton Bulletin when she spoke of educational reforms going on all over the country to meet the needs of youth. She "does not believe that present education system directs attention toward difficulties to be faced by the younger generation" (Feb 29, p 8).

b. Aberhart

The man looked up to as the educational leader of the province, Minister of Education and Premier, William Aberhart, had much to say about the reforms. On January 10, the Edmonton Journal noted that the "curriculum committee of the provincial department of education headed by Premier Aberhart, met . . . to advance plans for alterations in high school curriculum throughout the province" (p 9). Aberhart is quoted as saying the aim was to "make high school education more useful in later life . . . and to improve the curriculum in rural high schools." He saw the institution of larger units as the key to this end.

Aberhart returned to this theme frequently. When he announced his intentions to introduce provisions for far-reaching educational reforms, he tied the larger units of administration to a "new curriculum adequate for today's needs for rural students" (EB, Jan 29, p 2).

The Albertan gave front page coverage to Aberhart's address to the convention of the Alberta Educational Federation, headlining it with reference to a "new era" in education. Underscoring President Gordon G. Harmon's remarks that Alberta was on the verge of a new era, Aberhart stated that "the work and efficiency of education would be entirely changed in the next few years". He warned that the "unprogressive teacher must of necessity face the danger of losing out".

In the entire context of the social, political and economic revolution occurring in Alberta, Aberhart saw that "education must at least keep pace, if not lead". And he was not above pointing an unkind finger at the negative attitude of the school trustees. "The government took the steps of introducing the new curriculum and the enlarged school districts in spite of the opposition of the trustees and school boards, who felt their local autonomy was being taken away from them" (CA, Apr 15, pp 1, 2).

The significance of this speech can be seen from the fact that the A.T.A. Magazine published it in its entirety, as did the Social Credit Supplement of the Calgary Albertan (May 30). Thus, every school teacher and supposedly all good Social Crediters who subscribed to the Albertan would have been able to read this lengthy statement.

Speaking to a Calgary meeting of the Home and School Club, Aberhart again stressed school reforms as part of "a new social order, banning selfishness" which was being evolved in Alberta and that "the whole trend of education was being changed" to meet that end (EB, Nov 7, p 12).

The January 1937 cover of the A.T.A. Magazine best summarizes this attitude of Aberhart:

> Those of us who are actively interested in education have reason to feel that substantial progress has been achieved during the past year. A beginning has been made toward certain objectives which will probably require several years to attain in full measure. We have at least the framework of improved types of organization in school administration as well as in the actual work of the classroom.

3. Columnists

None of the dailies I examined provided their readers with a regular column on educational concerns. The regular columnists seem almost to studiously avoid comments on education. Almost by way of exception the Calgary Herald's "Observer" dealt with the question of larger units (vide supra). Some of his remarks touch upon the curricular reform.

J. S. Cowper, a regular columnist for the Edmonton Bulletin, in his "The Passing Show", broke a long silence on November 12, the day of municipal elections. Although he made no explicit reference to the reforms of the day, one passage seems to allude to them. "As a survivor of the stick and strap era of pedagogy . . . I have a great respect for the teacher who applies psychology and a knowledge of child nature to the impressionable minds under his or her care" (p 4).

C. Public Meetings

Throughout 1936 a variety of meetings of interest groups dealt with the educational reforms. In many instances the speakers chosen were those who could best inform groups about the changes being introduced. Community groups of all kinds discussed these matters. Teachers' conventions devoted major portions of their 1936 meetings to matters related to the curricular modifications.

1. Community Groups

a. U.F.W.A.

From the earliest beginnings in 1915, the United Farm Women of Alberta stated their objectives as educational rather than political. The members would work to educate themselves and their children, and to work for positive changes in the system of rural schooling. Among the rural population of Alberta, this work laid a most solid foundation for a climate of opinion that would welcome radical change rather than resist it. The history of social change amply demonstrates the significance of such a movement. Despite the collapse of the U.F.A. government, the U.F.W.A. continued its efforts for educational reform.

At their meeting in Edmonton in late January of 1936, Mary Crawford, a prominent educationist and social commentator, apparently replacing Donalda Dickie as keynote speaker, spoke to the U.F.W.A. members on the new curriculum. She had special praise for the enterprise system wherein "reading, writing and mathematics are taught . . . by being put to use. . . . Children thus learn to work each for all and all for each" (EB, Jan 22, p 6). Her comments on individualism as the biggest threat to the social fabric and the school's role in irradicating such an evil were well received by the members.

Irene Parlby framed a resolution that "the U.F.W.A. members were in accord with the changes being made in the curriculum and viewed with approbation the experiments underway, expressing hope for their success" (CA, Jan 25, p 18). The resolution carried.

The Western Producer, with a wide rural circulation across the western prairies, had a regular column written by U.F.W.A. spokespersons. Although the January 16 column made no explicit reference to education, the unmistakable tone of reform expresses powerful support for fundamental change:

> The defenders of precedent, the worshippers of custom, those who seek nothing good except that which is clothed by the dress of antiquity, revolt at the thought of change. They hold up their hands in horror and turn their eyes heavenward if anyone suggests, "the old order changeth". For today there has come a consciousness to many that we are being hindered in progress by adhering to worn out dogma and outlived precedent. Likewise there has come a new freedom born of reason, realization and convincing demonstration, that we must live in the present (p 13).

A stronger and more explicit statement appeared two weeks later, clearly expressing a perceived connection between schooling and social reform:

> We have erred in mistaking the individual cramming of our youth with textbook knowledge to the exclusion of that cooperative spirit upon which our society must ultimately depend. . . . The tools of knowledge are of primary importance in the development of human ability, but today our school system is failing because it is placing the forging of the tool as the end and aim of education itself; hence we witness over-worked teachers and nerve-wracked students dissecting and memorizing the textbooks in order to gain diplomas and degrees. Such a process has a deadening effect upon the school and its product. Instead of being a vital thing in a living, moving environment, it becomes a source of mental stagnation. Nor can it be otherwise unless greater opportunities are afforded for real living and all that the term applies /sic/. In a changing world the school must adjust itself to its environment and mere textbook veneer must give place to adequate preparation for life itself (WP, Jan 30, p 13).

The author ~~goes on from these premises~~ to support the larger units of administration, revised curriculum, and new organization of material to allow the slow and backward children the opportunity to develop and the bright ones to proceed more quickly.

"Every consideration of our whole attitude toward the basic problem of education is urgently imperative" (Ibid.).

And a week later, while the trustees of Alberta and Saskatchewan were debating the larger units, the column gave readers another strong statement supporting the idea of change of a profound nature. This consistent thrust of the U.F.W.A. was therefore repeated often enough in the papers of the day for readers in the province to know where they stood. Such expressions of "grassroots" support for change contributed to the acceptance of Aberhart's plans.

b. Social Credit Study Groups

Shortly after the Social Credit party purchased the Calgary Albertan, supplement sections began to appear every Saturday. As the voice of the party among the daily press, this supplement almost always presented brief news items from the study groups in most constituencies. I have mentioned the support these groups gave the government periodically on the matter of the larger units, using their support as evidence of grassroot support for reform. Since the larger units of administration were meant to make the new curriculum possible, it would be reasonable, *a fortiori*, to say that the study groups also discussed and supported the broader educational reforms. In particular, the rural groups desired better training for their youth.

Nevertheless, I found no explicit references to the reforms outlined in this section in those parts of the Albertan, though admittedly, I did not read every week's supplement.

c. Other Groups

Although the newspaper stories of the A.S.T.A. Convention in early February became preoccupied with discussion of larger units, the chairman, Professor A. E. Ottewell of Edmonton, presented a report from the committee on rural education. He suggested cooperation for the new curriculum now being tried in some provincial schools, advising close observation be kept (CA, Feb 4, p 1).

Besides those groups mentioned already in dealing with news articles of educationists and politicians meeting with such groups as the Kiwanis, the Optimists, the Women's Institute, and various educational bodies, several other references seem noteworthy.

On Wednesday, February 19, the Edmonton Social Study Club met at the King Edward Hotel to hear G. H. Marr introduce the new curriculum. He spoke primarily about the early grades and the competency of teachers for those children. "It was felt that the present system of education has failed in a considerable measure to properly equip the child for life and should be improved by giving greater prominence in both public and high schools to such subjects as biology, sex and psychology." The ideas were "endorsed unanimously" by the members present. (EB, Feb 21, p 9).

A Calgary high school principal, P. R. Brecken, told a Kiwanis group that Alberta High Schools must offer more options. Alberta schools have "not kept in step with movements for developing education" (CA, Feb 21, p 10).

A few days later another Calgary high school spokesman, H. G. Beacon of Crescent Heights, spoke to the Lions Club in favor of more flexibility in educational programs (CA, Feb 27, p 9).

In somewhat the same vein, an A.T.A. representative, Miss L. Maguire, addressed a Y.W.C.A. group in Edmonton about educational fallacies and educational reform (EB, Mar 27, p 6).

Perhaps the most interesting of these meetings took place at the annual roundup meeting of the Provincial Home and School Federation held at Mount Royal College, Calgary. The old curriculum and the new furnished the material for a burlesque, in what the news reporter viewed as a "jolly evening" (CA, Jun 1, p 12).

At a meeting of the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, the school board chairman, A. E. Ottewell, addressed the gathering on the matter of school taxes; indicating that people complained of high taxes and school boards "throwing away money" to provide the changes demanded by the new programs of study and the reorganization of schools, but that these "improvements cost money and you must not flinch from bearing the expense". He turned to the enterprise system and "predicted that it would exert a profound effect upon education in Edmonton" (EB, Oct 10, p 9).

Meanwhile, the regular meetings of school boards frequently dealt with matters related to the curriculum revisions. I will deal at length with the Calgary and Edmonton systems later. Here I need only mention that despite the problems incurred by these systems in making the changes, I found no evidence in the newspapers of opposition to the reforms on theoretical grounds or on a matter of principle.

I have already mentioned Aberhart's address to the Alberta Federation of Home and School. The Calgary Albertan carried a longer report than the Bulletin. Aberhart is reported as stressing the need to humanize the educational system. "We have attempted to make our schools so practical . . . that we have forgotten to develop in these students the higher virtues." He went on to challenge the Home and School Federation to take on a year's task to carefully study three distinct topics: 1. Why the old curriculum was inadequate in its aims, its failure to meet essentials, its lack of results; 2. What ought the goal of the educational system of the future be in meeting the demands of modern life, in qualities to be developed in students to meet those demands, the responsibilities of the home, and the influence of the teachers; and 3. Whether the new curriculum would meet the cherished goals of education in its structure, its content, in its ability to train students to fill their place in the new social order. "Having discovered the truth through such studies . . . the federation must then inform the parents, and through them the school authorities, on what should be done" (CA, Nov 7, p 13).

These meetings certainly indicate that for a wide range of interest groups, educational reform was a vital topic of current concern. Certainly the papers did not report the doings of every group in Alberta and just as certainly they did not report every topic discussed. The small representation sampled here indicates both interest in and knowledge about the reforms on a fairly broad popular level.

2. Teachers' Conventions

Most of the fall teachers' conventions scheduled major portions of their time to practical questions related to the new curriculum, especially the enterprise system; "the attitude of the average pupil to the scheme, the new duties imposed upon the teacher . . . will provide themes for animated and prolonged discussion" (EB, Nov 12, p 15). The newspapers gave them good coverage, judging their discussions to the kind of news that would interest the general public.

G. R. McNally was the featured speaker at the Lamont Inspectorate Convention and chose to deal with enterprise education (EB, Oct 8, p 6). On the same day (pp 9, 16) the Bulletin carried news about the Edmonton and the Camrose teachers holding their conventions. At Camrose, discussion centered on the newer courses in the curriculum, especially social studies, drama, and reading.

The Lamont teachers heard Edmonton Normal Practice School principal, W. D. McDougall, speak about their responsibilities to train future leaders in the context of the current emphasis on advanced educational policy (EB, Oct 9, p 2). They were treated to some fine rhetoric by Emrys Jones, director of dramatics in the Edmonton schools. Of the new drama program, he said, "One of the prime purposes of the dramatic program recently adopted in our schools . . . is to endow pupils with pleasant, effortless speech, graceful, confident carriage and the strengthening of their critical faculty" (Ibid.).

At the banquet of the Edmonton Teachers' Convention, Edmonton superintendent, G. A. McKee, in a speech that covered a variety of current issues in education, cautioned teachers that enterprise education could have the opposite effect as that intended. Remarking that good teachers had been using the enterprise technique all along in extra-curricular activities, he said, "Now it is being emphasized, but there is the danger in it that we may be making education too easy. We must watch that it is not overdone or boys and girls will go out from the schools with hazy ideas, unable to organize or co-ordinate themselves for the activities of life" (EB, Oct 9, p 10).

That the enterprise program created difficulties for some teachers is evident from a remark made by William Hay, the district inspector, at the Stettler Inspectorate Convention. He "urged that the enterprise work be persevered in, even if at first attempts proved disappointing" (EB, Nov 5, p 5). Another inspector, J. J. LeBlanc, echoed these sentiments at the Edmonton East and West Rural Convention. Teachers must "realize that enterprise education could only succeed if they experimented carefully with all the proposed new methods of tuition and did not let apparent initial obstacles discourage them" (EB, Nov 13, p 10).

However, such mildly negative comments were more than offset by the positive tone of most of the newspaper reports of conventions in "a year . . . marked by many striking innovations in educational policy" (EB, Nov 12, p 15). At Stettler J. W. Barnett saw bright prospects for teachers. "The eyes of the teaching profession everywhere were upon Alberta's new educational experiment" (EB, Nov 5, p5);

and at the Edmonton East and West Rural, Mackay school teacher, Miss Kathleen Ramsay, was expressing high enthusiasm. "The adoption of enterprise education has resulted in making even backward pupils show a new interest in their work. . . . Parents were often surprised at the many questions children ask them concerning classroom work, and indicated that the absence of a rigid program of studies was helping to make of discussion classes a medium for developing initiative and intelligence amongst all pupils" (EB, Nov 14, p 16). Other teachers exhibited evidence of progress made under the new system.

November was a busy month for the leading lights of the educational reforms, as conventions all over the province sought them as main speakers. In addition to those already mentioned, M. E. Lazerte appears to have been particularly busy, speaking at both northern and southern gatherings. (Cf. EB, Nov 12, p 15 and CA, Nov 12, p 9). H. C. Newland addressed the Medicine Hat Convention, while G. F. McNally visited Lethbridge (CA, Nov 13, p 1). Instructors from the Normal Schools also travelled to various centers to deal with the methodology and with questions of procedure regarding the new examination schedules (CA, Nov 13, p 9).

The examples I have cited indicate that the newspapers gave their readers sufficient information to follow at least some of the directions the new system was taking in the schools their children attended. Other articles about the conventions appeared, some as late as mid-December, showing constant interest in educational issues.

D. Effect on School Jurisdictions

The new policies and programs meant great changes for all school jurisdictions. The formation of the intermediate school presented the city school systems with considerable difficulties of reorganization and provided a great deal of material for newspapers, as they monitored board meetings and public opinion for controversial issues.

1. Calgary

Many considered the Calgary Public School System always a step or two ahead of the provincial norm educationally. (Cf. CH, Nov 17, p 4). A good number of the experiments with the new curriculum in 1935-35 took place in Calgary. Thus it was no surprise that the anticipated cost increase for the 1936-37 school year in response to the demands of the extended curriculum and the introduction of intermediate schools in urban districts would not be alarming (CA, Jan 24, p 9), despite the fact that the changes were described as "drastic" by the Herald when the announcements were made that the revised program of studies and reorganization was to become effective in the fall (CH, Apr 4, p 1). Superintendent F. G. Buchanan expressed unreserved support for the changes (CA, Apr 6, p 14).

The institution of intermediate schools and the consequent redistribution of children sparked an attempt on the part of the East Calgary and Ogden parents to block the school board's plan. A big headline announced that they had presented a petition with over 13,000 signatures protesting the plan to convert the East Calgary high school into an intermediate school; well over 200 students would be forced to go an additional two miles to school (CA, Jun 11, p 9).

An 80-minute debate, during which Board member R. T. Alderman attempted unsuccessfully to obtain a year's delay, resulted in the acceptance of the distribution plan despite the petition. All the members except Alderman (who abstained) voted in favor of the redistribution (CA, Jun 13, p 13). Their petition having been thus ignored, the East Calgary ratepayers wired Premier Aberhart in an attempt to overturn the decision (CA, Jul 2, p 9). In the same news article the number of signatures on the petition was corrected to 1379. Despite the attempt at ministerial intervention the reorganization proceeded as planned.

A letter to the Albertan (Sep 9, p 4) reveals that the school board had promised free transportation for the students affected, but had failed to deliver on the promise:

> Now, after the schools have opened, the relief committee decides that car fares will not be provided. Will the school board disclaim all responsibility now that their objective is accomplished? . . . One can only come to the conclusion that the whole affair was cleverly planned and those bent upon making the changes knew what the outcome would be. Such Machiavellian tactics of playing upon the honesty of people to accomplish a dishonest purpose should be thoroughly condemned and exposed. Let the people of those communities lose no time in coming together to compel the authorities to provide transportation or revert to the former system and restore the high school to East Calgary.

Perhaps this experience helped fuel the Herald editor's attempt to sway ratepayers against voting for Social Credit candidates for school board positions. With two Social Creditors continuing as trustees, the election of the two Social Credit candidates would give them control of the seven member board, and they would in turn "be controlled by and subject to the dominance of the Social Credit government at Edmonton" (CH, Nov 17, p 4).

The editor was able to take delight two days later in the failure of the Social Credit machinery to elect the city commissioner while electing only two aldermen, but he remained silent on the school board results (CH, Nov 19, p 4). Both Social Credit candidates had been elected.

The educational reforms, in thus creating controversy in Calgary, produced public awareness and interest in what was happening to the schools.

2. Edmonton

The reorganization of the Edmonton schools generated a great deal of press. When superintendent G. A. McKee first presented his report on the changes required to institute the reforms announced by the government, "obviously appalled by the work entailed in the necessary readjustments, the trustees chose to take time 'to digest and study the report' before further action" (EJ, Apr 15, p 13). The new courses and equipment would cost money, as would a new pay scale for intermediate teachers. Trustee S. A. G. Barnes successfully moved that a provincial "superintendent of organization" be appointed by the government to guide school boards, and that the government also be asked for financial assistance for the new plan (EB, Apr 15, p 2).

On May 5, the School Board announced that five intermediate schools would be established, but a week later it was still evident that no actual cost estimates had been done. Neither McNally nor McKee had any figures. Barnes commented to the press that "nothing intelligent can be written on probable costs at this stage" (EJ, May 12, p 9). As late as October 14, the costs were still not clear, though no one was objecting to the costs. Questions seemed to center on how to find the means to pay.

As it became apparent that the reforms would change more than simply what happens in the classroom, some misgivings were expressed. The Bulletin editor advised parents to check carefully into the effect of "drastic readjustment of school facilities", warning that small children would not necessarily go to the nearest school building. "So far as possible changes should be made with a minimum of disturbance of established interests and habits" (EB, May 7, p 4). That seems to mean that the fine curriculum changes which most people could commend would be acceptable so long as no great externally discernable alterations occurred.

When McKee's plans for reorganization reached maturity, he brought them to the board. At first, it seemed that not too many students would be affected and Barnes confidently predicted general public acceptance (EJ, May 14, p 14). But when the board actually got to voting on accepting the report, Barnes objected to McKee's plans for the Eastwood intermediate school, which he was linking to the high school. "Mr. McKee has been opposed to intermediate schools for the past 10 years. His will should be forgotten for a short time at least and the board's considered" (EJ, May 27, p 13). Nonetheless the report was adopted, and by June 10, the first principal of an intermediate school, A. J. H. Powell, accepted the position at McCauley (EJ, Jun 10, p 9).

The changes in teaching assignments, despite the expectation that many would have to acquire special qualifications during the summer,met no objections from the teaching staff. McKee reported satisfaction with the fact that they had done "no lobbying" even though salary adjustments had not been decided. The board had also received a commendatory letter from the Department of Education on its reorganization scheme (EB, Jun 17, p 3).

But the parents of the McCauley school children, through spokesman Hugh R. Hoyle, approached the board for consideration for small children who would now have to go 7 to 9 blocks to school if McCauley were restricted to intermediate grades. Chairman Ottewell promised consideration (EJ, Jun 17, p 10).

Large headlines greeted the readers of the Bulletin on July 2 (p 9) when it became apparent that parents were not at all satisfied with the compromises proposed by McKee and endorsed by the teachers' union. Both the Journal and the Bulletin carried articles on July 7 and 8 with huge headlines of "Noisy Meeting" and "Violent Clash". "Half a dozen self-appointed spokesmen for the 200 parents in the district who attended the meeting presented their objections but failed to offer a solution" (EJ, Jul 7, p 11). So noisy was the meeting that Ottewell threatened to close it. Comments like children having to "walk through 10 feet of snow at 50 below" and "85% of the parents object to McCauley being chosen" and "the province should build a new school if it wants the new system" were reported.

At the board's own meeting reported the following day, Barnes led the fight against McKee and Ottewell. A veritable shouting match with gavel pounding and verbal abuse provided the papers with sensational material. But with teacher support and a somewhat mollified parent group, the passage of the report was assured, and Barnes retreated with a final salvo of giving notice of motion to consider replacing McKee as superintendent (EB, Jul 8, p 16). Meanwhile an angry parent wanted to know why homeowners had not been told what would happen before holidays began, suggesting that McCauley should be left alone and another school picked (EB, Jul 8, p 4).

The summer progressed and tempers cooler. Barnes faced more serious difficulties in being publicly drummed out of the Social Credit party. Thereafter, he made only minor waves in the school board meetings before announcing in October that he would not seek re-election after serving as a trustee for 25 years.

The board turned down McKee's attempt to save money by hiring a single principal (supervisor) for all intermediate schools (EB, Aug 26, p 16). On the following day he published the detailed plans for the school attendance of the city's pupils (EB, Aug 27, p 15). An enthusiastic news story greeted the Bulletin readers on school opening day, September 1. The 17,884 pupils would find changes.

> Things are different this year. The students are going into schools which are operated under a brand new set-up. They will be taught things they never were taught before. They will have lessons presented as they never were presented before.

The news story goes on to outline the changes the intermediate and elementary pupils could expect to find, climaxing with the enterprise system wherein the pupils would be able to "use their own heads . . . They're back at school for another year. Yes, but this one's different" (EB, Sep 1, p 9).

Several problems emerged. Registration, being more complex, took much longer for the grades 7, 8 and 9 students (EB, Sep 2, p 9). The Bulletin editor warned drivers that the new curriculum and school reorganization had altered the pattern of student traffic and that many crossings not formerly used would be full of children still unfamiliar with their own routes (Sep 8, p 4). School patrols were finally organized to direct traffic (EB, Sep 19, p 13). Later on, a news article reported that in the first month of school the Edmonton children had received less corporal punishment this year, perhaps because of new interests (EB, Oct 2, p 18).

What all these stories again illustrate is that the general public could not have been either indifferent or ignorant of the reforms, which directly affected their lives. Though their awareness may initially have been stimulated by changing demands on their behavior pattern, they would ultimately ask the question of why it was all necessary. The daily newspapers of Edmonton provided some of the answers to such a question.

3. Other School Jurisdictions

The experiences of the two major cities were repeated on a smaller scale in virtually every school jurisdiction.

Many ratepayers of Jasper attended a school meeting at which principal Miss Matheson explained the new teaching methods and the extended options, pointing out that the school would be building another room and would hire another teacher (EB, Jul 3, p 10). A subsequent report seemed to indicate general satisfaction. "School opened on Tuesday with a good attendance, and the usual good resolutions for the coming term. The new curriculum is creating a great deal of interest; wood working, sewing and junior business courses will be taught for the first time this year" (EB, Sep 2, p 6).

The separate school district of Edmonton found it necessary to restrict entry into the commercial courses in high school, and could open only one intermediate school in the city; others would follow when conditions permitted (EB, Aug 26, p 16).

If these are typical examples, it would seem that the various districts handled the new situation as well as they could, marking time, if necessary, until they could do better, but not resisting the general thrust of the reforms.

Other educational institutions felt the impact of the reforms. Alberta College, which had taken in some 40 students during the summer to fit themselves for teaching the new curriculum, announced that it would specialize in options required for the new curriculum and that it would provide correspondence and evening instruction for teachers wishing to upgrade (EB, Aug 26, p 7).

E. Effect on Summer School

As soon as the government announced that the new curriculum and the new organization would become mandatory for all schools in the fall, planning began for a larger-than-normal enrollment in summer school courses offered by the University of Alberta in conjunction with the Department of Education for teachers to upgrade their qualifications in preparation for the new curriculum (EG, Apr 17, p 13). By late June and the first days of July, the expected number rose to 1500, creating a degree of excitement at the prospect of breaking all previous records (EJ, Jun 27, p 13; EB, Jul 2, p 3). In anticipation of a rush in the fall on the drama options in the new curriculum, drama courses were expected to be favored (EB, Jul 3, p 8).

"New Record for Summer School Here" greeted the readers of the *Bulletin* on July 4. "Congestion of the summer school . . . to an extent never before experienced has resulted from the enrollment of teachers taking the new courses which will be required . . . this fall" (p 24). Preparation for enterprise education seemed the prime cause of the large increase. Newland, who directed the summer school on behalf of the Department of Extension, announced that new music sections had also to be added and additional staff secured. Residence accommodations also proved difficult to find as students scrambled for locations in the university district.

But when the classes actually commenced on July 7, the numbers exceeded all predictions. "Bewildered authorities are finding themselves hard pressed to cope with the situation that has resulted from the tremendous registration" (EB, Jul 8, p 16).

At least two classes ended with enrollments exceeding 600 students. More than 2300 had passed the registration desks and more still waited in line. While officials struggled with ways and means of making class space available, students experimented in a variety of novel solutions to problems of accommodation (Ibid.).

The situation was tailor-made for conflict. "Fight Looms" the headline proclaimed on page 11 of the July 10 Bulletin. "Considerable dissatisfaction is being expressed by students . . . at the necessity of studying the grade nine optional subjects", since many believed their teaching experience or their Normal School training or their M. A.'s should suffice. They resented the new requirements that they would have to give up their teaching positions if they refused to take the summer courses prescribed. "Tremendous overcrowding of classrooms" presented another cause for complaint since "confusion still prevailed" in several courses.

The shortage of accommodations created an additional "uproar" as complaints of "soaking" were common. Students felt they were generally taken advantage of in the tight housing situation. Bitterness over this was compounded by the fact that many had been forced to borrow money to come to a compulsory summer school.

These stories prompted Newland to go to the press. He denied that there was any discord about having to take the grade nine courses since every teacher knew that he could not teach what he did not know. He cited music as a good example. He also denied complaints of overcrowding. "Seats are provided for everyone. . . .

The school has settled down after some slight confusion on the first day or two, . . . now functioning as smoothly as in previous years" (EJ, Jul 11, p 13).

Aberhart himself expressed surprise when he heard reports of dissatisfaction. He told a reporter that he had not heard a thing about high fees, the conduct of the school or lack of cooperation (EB, Aug 5, p 16).

A display of the "tremendous possibilities" of enterprise education at the Arts Building of the University provided the material for an enthusiastic article toward the end of the summer session. "Lucky children! . . . Gone is the dry dull-printed word of the geography book, the painful map and pointer system, a happy sacrifice to the new type of education about to go into effect in Alberta. A display of work in the new enterprise education plan shows what can be accomplished in teaching the child to use his hands as well as his imagination" (EB, Aug 7, p 8).

The news stories, covering such catchy items as new records, controversy, conflicting opinion, brought to the attention of readers more than just the events reported. Every story made reference to the "new curriculum", to the "new system" of education being instituted in the province. Exciting news stories such as those provided by the summer session of 1936 kept people conscious of and informed about the reforms.

F. Editorial Comments

Editors chose to comment less on the reforms under this section than about the larger units. What editorials appeared supported the changes.

When the reforms were first announced, the Journal supported not only administrative centralization but also the new curriculum, pointing out the desirability of making all the contemplated changes simultaneously, and called on Aberhart to

> command the entire weight of his following in the legislature to ensure general acceptance. . . . The government is in a strong position right now to effect even greater reforms in the whole educational system. It is a new government, it commands an unprecedented majority in the legislature, and so is in an almost ideally strategic position to establish precedents.

The editor went on to discuss changes in taxation. Commending the report of a tax inquiry board just printed, he urged acceptance of its recommendation that the province "assume a much greater share of the cost of education" and thereby fully support the new curriculum which "calls for a new technique in teaching and this suggests a higher-standard, and hence a higher-paid teaching staff" (EJ, Jan 23, p 4). No reformer could ask for greater editorial support.

The Journal editor returned to this theme on September 1 on the occasion of school reopening.

> Alberta today begins an experiment in education. . . . /The editor went on to outline briefly the new system of divisions, the enterprise method and the new curriculum, all in the most positive light. But he did not see how these desirable reforms could

> be left in the hands of hundreds of school boards many of which lacked imagination and vision.] Often, however, it will not be a matter of "vision" but of dollars and cents. The new curriculum is "government policy". Announcing it and then leaving it to hundreds of school boards to make it effective again demonstrates an old weakness of the present educational system. Rural schools are operating under conditions that differ tremendously in different parts of the province. Some find it very difficult even to pay the teacher's salary while others are well off and able to engage better trained teachers and to supply all the technical material necessary. Until the department of education assumes administration of all schools, this weakness will continue (p 4).

The editor of the Calgary Albertan wholeheartedly supported Aberhart as Minister of Education, telling children they would some day recognize what a privilege it had been to have gone to school in his era. About the contemplated reforms, he said, "As the world wags on new subjects become necessary. We cannot continue to pyramid them forever on already overcrowded curricula; therefore, they must displace something. Methods of teaching, too, will have to be improved sooner or later and the pupils learn less and reason more" (Apr 16, p 4).

On June 2 (p 4) the same editor supported the concept of intermediate schools with their possible options and as possible terminal schools. "This change is one feature of the new Alberta educational policy and set-up which is planned for the purpose of fitting children to meet life more adequately than heretofore." This same theme appeared in the June 13 editorial when he approved the remarks of a New York educator, Dr. Grady, that revisions were needed in modern education, for we keep children in school and feed them the wrong diet since very few go into the learned professions (p 4).

The Bulletin editor avoided comments on these education reforms until the election of the Edmonton Public School Board returned all the old trustees except one. It was just as well in a time of restraint and complex financial problems to have a school board familiar with the system when "entirely new and radically different methods are being introduced into the schools" (Nov 13, p 4).

In a context broader than the Alberta educational reforms, the editor of the Western Catholic cautioned his readers not to seek solutions to social ills anywhere but in the teaching of Christ. Without condemning progressive education, he pointed out its limitations.

> Progressive education, professedly a panacea, has no solution to offer. The home, morality and religion are what have been called the "constants" of civilization. They offer no field for experimentation. The school furthers social progress only by imparting to the young a deep appreciation of those constants. If the individual is to be reformed it can only be by adherence to absolute moral standards. . . . We can achieve the social formation of youth only by imbuing them with social ideas, developing in them social attitudes or sentiments, and eliciting from them social acts. These ideas sentiments and acts are derived from the moral teaching of Christ . . . This moral law . . . must be wisely accepted and lived before it can produce any notable effects on our social life (Sep 16, p 6).

We can say therefore, that editorials commented on the educational reforms in a generally positive way. How influential these few comments might have been is not as important as the fact that here is still another newspaper section that calls attention to the reforms, keeping at least a portion of readers informed and thinking about what was going on.

G. Letters to the Editors

1. Favoring the Changes

Several readers took the time to write strongly supportive letters on the proposed educational reforms. I have already quoted "anti-Social Credit" in support of the larger units. In his letter he saw the essential connection between the larger administrative units and the other reforms and that is why he argued for the larger units. "We know that we cannot benefit as we should from the new methods in education if we retain the old set-up. We want the best in technique and teachers for our schools" (EJ, Feb 12, p 4).

Arthur Green of Duchess believed the "present system is faulty", and argued for more child-centered courses and experiential learning. "It would be better if we could see young people leaving school with some realization of their duties and responsibilities" (CH, Apr 8, p 4).

Others wrote letters that seem to indicate a frame of mind agreeable to educational reform without specifically mentioning the Alberta prospects. O. Vogstad of Redcliffe, spurred by a speech given by University of Alberta president Wallace, quoted parts of *Emile* to illustrate support for the concept of educating the whole child and allowing each child to proceed at his own pace.

> We should leave the child the freedom to think as a child, and not force it, . . . but give it time and let it gradually develop its different gifts and intelligence, as nature wanted us to, and not teach the child to reason and think as an adult. The child's mind will lose some of its originality and charm that way (CH, Mar 21, p 4).

Calling for a change in the upper echelons of the Edmonton Public School Board which he considered "infested with a number of theorists and psychological faddists . . . drawing fat salaries," "Junius" seems to agree with the direction of Alberta's changes in the passage which followed:

> When we are free of these intellectual quacks we can then devote our whole time to forming a less expensive educational course which will require thinking on the part of the student instead of an unhealthy and abnormally developed memory (EB, Apr 2, p 4).

2. Opposing the Changes

Still others either argued against the reforms or offered other solutions. Although not coming out directly against the curriculum reforms and not denying the importance of the educational proposals, a "parent" from Blackfalds nonetheless expressed some misgivings and suggested a different pattern of reform:

> The curriculum as outlined has caused uneasiness to pupils, parents, and teachers. The pupils, many of whom have worked hard to attain a certain standing, feel that much of its merit will be lost. The parents have misgivings along the same lines and the teachers themselves are confused and doubtful of beneficial results.
>
> It is not academic standing of teachers which needs to be raised but cultural standing. If Mr. Aberhart would institute in the normal schools a course in deportment or plain old English manners, it would be of great assistance to many new Canadian teachers who have not yet learned our ways and to many other teachers whose homes lacked much in such advantages (EJ, Mar 21, p 4).

An even more novel educational reform came from "Open Conspirator", Evansburg. To get a "better general education than that enjoyed by any university graduate", one had only to spend $20.00 on 6 books, three by H. G. Wells, two of Van Doren's Anthologies, and Will Durant's Story of Philosophy. According to him the modern state "will have as little place or use for the ignorant and uneducated as for the moron or imbecile; second, . . . our present education will prove inadequate as a preparation for life in it" (EB, Apr 6, p 4).

Once more, it is clear that readers reflected an atmosphere of change and generally accepted the idea that fundamental change was either inevitable or necessary and desirable. None argued for the maintenance of the status quo.

H. School Opening, September 1936

Only the Edmonton Bulletin chose to make an issue of the prospect of an entirely different year ahead. Its news story (Sep 1, p 9) promised the children new subjects and completely different teaching methods. They could look forward to an exciting year. The Edmonton Journal zeroed in on the unfortunate circumstances that the new text books had not yet arrived and the old books would be unsaleable (Sep 2, p 13). The Calgary Albertan was preoccupied with the visit of Governor General Tweedsmuir in the first week of the next school year.

The Western Catholic used the occasion to remind its readers that even though Catholic schools would be using the same curriculum as the public schools, they should continue to support the efforts of Catholic education as the only one which had not abandoned its spiritual ideas for the materialistic objectives of secular institutions (Sep 1, p 6).

I. Analysis

There could be no doubt in any reader's mind even in the early weeks of 1936 that educational reforms would come and that they would be far-reaching. One could legitimately expect that the January 22 announcements would have aroused some vociferous outcry, either at the speed or at the thoroughness of the contemplated reforms. If the newspapers are any indication, no such outcry occurred. I found no evidence that teachers or people generally were overwhelmed or caught by surprise. In fact, the contrary seems the case.

Change had been in the air for a long time. Although the material is sketchy, the bits and pieces fit together sufficiently to show that most of those concerned with education, whether at the professional or lay level, had had lengthy discussions for years; that the general public had at least some awareness; and that some specific groups had long been engaged in supporting a thorough-going educational reform movement.

In fact, even with only the newspaper evidence, a case could be made that the 1936 curriculum changes may well present a model of reform. With the adherence and active leadership of those within the power structure (the professionals and the politicians) and with the knowledge, interest and active support of the general public as represented by such concerned groups as the U.F.W.A. and the

Social Credit study groups, the initiation of the reform was assured. Methods had been developed to prepare those who would be instituting the changes at the practical level (the classrooms).[1] The political, economic, and social conditions were such that a general atmosphere favoring change prevailed. There is even some indication that the people of Alberta took pride in the leadership they were displaying in educational change.

The newspapers repeated the ideas and some of the salient details of the reforms in so many different ways and under such a variety of circumstances, whether in general news stories, in controversial events, in editorials, in letters, in reports of public meetings, and in statements of well-known community figures, that the general reader could easily have become acquainted with the direction and with considerable detailed information about the reforms. The amount of material indicates that the editors of the papers believed a high enough level of interest was present to warrant the inclusion of a great many stories and articles about the reforms.

Finally, the newspapers do not indicate any opposition of any real consequence to the educational reforms. I found not a single expression of opposition on grounds of a threat of Americanism encroaching upon Canadian thought or Canadian education. If such existed, it appeared in other media or developed later.

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[1] Although this is not part of the present paper, nor could one expect much evidence in 1936, this ultimately proved to be the weakest link in the chain of events.

Discomfort and hesitations with the reforms came almost exclusively over questions of how practically to accomplish some of the structural and organizational changes necessary to put the reforms into operation.

IV

OTHER CHANGES

A. Amendments to the Teaching Profession Act

The U.F.A. government had yielded to the pressure of trustees not only in the matter of the larger units, but also in the matter of making membership in the Alberta Teachers' Association automatic or compulsory in 1935 when it passed the Teaching Profession Act. When Aberhart announced that he would introduce an amendment to that effect, the A.S.T.A. immediately attempted to block it, finding a strong ally in the Calgary Herald.

With front page headlines announcing forced membership in the A.T.A., the Herald news story (Feb 18) told of a delegation of trustees meeting the Cabinet-in-Council to discuss the matter. The delegation brought with it the negative views of the Calgary convention, though it was evident that some of the delegates themselves favored compulsory membership, among them Dr. A. E. Ottewell, who saw advantages in professionals disciplining themselves. The trustees opposed the amendment on grounds that it would make of the teachers' union a "closed shop". With this "big stick" would go the threat of power to dominate education at the local level, which trustees would "never tolerate". They might agree, they told Aberhart, if the fees were so nominal that the A.T.A. would be unable to build up a "war chest" to oppose the trustees in the courts.

On the following day the Herald editor's bitter diatribe accused Aberhart of "professional bias" and of not acting "from consideration as a minister of the Crown". The editorial stated that the majority of teachers did not want it, the A.S.T.A. had consistently opposed it and "the public wants none of it" (Feb 19, p 4). The Bulletin editor also entered the lists. Although he admitted that the Social Credit government would likely go ahead with the legislation, it would not be right to exclude from teaching anyone who graduated from a provincial Normal School so long as he complied with government regulations for admission (Feb 24, p 4).

The Herald editor was not content with a single volley. On March 2 he called the amendment "dangerous" and "against the will of the people". On March 6, he found it a "sinister threat" to democracy and on March 9 he warned teachers that they would fall under the power of a small group of union bosses.

Nonetheless the government announced its intention to proceed (EB, Mar 7, p 5). A delegation from both Calgary and Edmonton separate school districts representing the members of religious orders teaching in separate schools lobbied in favor of exemption from the proposed laws (EB, Mar 14, p 5). In what the Bulletin called the "longest debate on any bill in the session" (Mar 19, p 9) and the Herald termed "one of the most hectic debates" (CH, Mar 19, p 3), the amendment passed despite the opposition of several Social Credit backbenchers.

Although he made reference to the government "railroading new and far-reaching laws" (Mar 26, p 4), the Herald editor refrained from further comment until April 14, on the occasion of the joint meeting of the A.T.A. and the A.F.E., when he wondered whether the teachers would yet take up the topic of "unionization", and sniffed that Aberhart had "not yet made any startling pronouncements regarding the educational system of the province" (p 4).

One unnamed spokesman of the A.T.A. lauded the government for making membership compulsory despite the A.S.T.A. "which seemed to extend itself to the limit in exercising pressure on the members of the legislature to kill sound educational measures" (EB, Apr 14, p 11).

The teachers discussed not only unionization but politicization. The headlines proclaimed that "Teachers Refuse to Withdraw from Political Action" in a story that reported an almost unanimous rejection of a resolution to forbid the A.T.A. officers from political action that could "associate the A.T.A. with any political party" (CH, Apr 17, p 16).

Once again editorial comment in the Herald showed a negative tone. The editor hoped that teachers would take their professional ethics seriously. He called upon the government to exercise control over those who get certificates and therefore become eligible for A.T.A. membership. There were already too many certifiable teachers around but it was "questionable whether there is any surplus of real teachers in this province" (CH, Apr 18, p 4).

One letter to the editor took issue with the unionization of the A.T.A., finding it "smacking of Hitlerism" (CH, Apr 24, p 4).

Other than ruffling feathers of some MLA's and the editor of the Herald, this piece of reform legislation seems to have created no popular concern one way or the other. In the fall sitting of the legislature a clarification of the amendment to provide that all teachers, including those already hired, would have to be members of the A.T.A. passed without comment or question (EB, Sep 1, p 9).

Once again these stories and articles concerning educational change in the province indicate that the people of Alberta had the opportunity to keep up with what was happening, and at least one editor believed the issue significant enough to come back to it quite often, challenging his readers to question the direction Aberhart was taking Alberta education.

B. Adult Education

The educational reforms so far discussed have focused mainly on school-age years. When G. F. McNally spoke to the Canadian Club, he made it clear that the comprehensive plan for a new system of education in Alberta included much more. Besides the activity program (enterprise) and the limited number of school districts employing expert superintendents, the government would also provide a comprehensive plan of teacher selection and training, a revised taxation system, adequate library services, a plan for scholarships for deserving and needy students, and a "province-wide program of adult education" (EB, May 27, p 2).

Although a certain amount of adult education happened informally through community groups of all kinds, some of which devoted considerable time to educating their members, formal programs for life-long education were rare. That at least some people were aware of the need may be surmised from the fact that at an elocution contest held at the University one farm youth chose to speak on the topic of adult education, and that a newspaper chose to quote from his speech. "It is necessary to broaden man's political outlook and refine his tastes" (EB, Jun 12, p 5).

Miss Geneva Misener, considered an outstanding Canadian educationist, was quoted in a lengthy article about her leadership in promoting the establishment of a system of adult education (EB, Jul 6, p 6). The Catholic Women's League talked about the need for a practical adult education program (WC, Aug 5, p 3).

McNally returned to the theme of adult education in his address to the Kiwanis Club on September 28. "One of the prime faults of Alberta education has been that after we have had young people under our influence for 10 or 12 years, they go away and thank heaven that that at last is over, thinking they are educated, and neglect their studies ever afterwards." Many realize their mistake later, but then they can no longer remedy the situation because of ingrained habits of not studying. "I would like to envisage the day when everyone will be able to study . . . those very subjects which interest the adult citizen and have an obvious appreciative value for him." He foresaw the possibility of receiving graduation certificates for such study. He felt the hope for this lay in the enterprise system which not only elicited individual initiative, but called for library facilities which would open the path to cultural and educational growth through reading (EB, Sep 9, p 2).

At the Edmonton Teachers' Convention Donald Cameron, from the Extension Department of the University, expressed the view that the general attitude to education in Western Canada was all wrong. Prone to considering education over with formal schooling, Albertans could learn much from the Scandinavian Folk Schools, which provided a form of continued education (EB, Oct 9, p 2).

Not a great deal appears in the papers of 1936 about adult education; still, one could say that some interest showed up here and there, though not enough to indicate what eventually happened in Alberta's leadership in this field.

V

CONCLUSIONS

A. General Conclusions

In a review of the first session of the Social Credit government, a news article in the Edmonton Bulletin termed it the most far-reaching of any single session in the history of the province. The writer singled out some of the more significant measures enacted in the 102 bills that received royal assent. The education bill was not mentioned (EB, Apr 7, p 1).

On August 22 the Bulletin looked back at the first year of Social Credit rule, pointing out the "outstanding pieces of legislation . . . of greatest importance to the province" (p 1). Again, education received no mention. In a year-end review, an editorial entitled "Alberta Started Something" said nothing about education when it spelled out the new beginnings taken (EB, Dec 30, p 4).

And finally, a major article on the last day of the year, "Year 1936 Marked by Important Events in Edmonton", makes no reference to the educational changes (EB, Dec 31, p 11). Other dailies were equally silent.

In the face of such silence it might be tempting to conclude that in the final analysis the reforms were unimportant, irrelevant to the people, or inconsequential in their effects. Such a conclusion is unwarranted. Once instituted, the reforms soon lost their newsworthiness. They were not the sort of thing about which editors or the general public thought every day.

Hundreds of articles appeared in the 1936 papers on the major educational reforms. The amount of material is, in itself, enough to justify the general conclusion that the Alberta public was interested, knowledgeable and supportive of the general direction of the reforms. Some specific parts of some of the reforms met opposition from specific interest groups, but there is no evidence of any concerted action to oppose the reform measures except for the actions of the school trustees to block the larger units and compulsory membership in the A.T.A.

Based on the premise that the Alberta newspapers reflected public opinion fairly closely, the amount of material and the frequent placement of news stories on the more favored pages suggests not only considerable interest in the reforms, but the importance attached to them at the time. The repetition of detailed information about the reforms suggests the possibility of a good level of knowledge. And the supportive tenor of the vast majority of the material clearly demonstrates widespread support for the changes.

Other stories received bigger headlines. Other controversies sparked longer and more acrimonious debate. But few other movements hit the papers as persistently over the year or received such consistent press coverage. Hardly a week went by all year without something being printed. The mere appearance of so many articles seems to prove that the reading public of Alberta could not fail to take notice.

It really would not have mattered what paper a person read. Each newspaper, whether city daily or rural weekly, proved basically supportive and reasonably accurate and complete in reporting the news about the reforms.

I found no evidence that any paper took it upon itself to press actively for any of the reforms. Rather, the stories proved sufficiently newsworthy, either because inherent human interest, political significance or the personalities involved seemed to demand space. Again, this clearly shows that people were interested in the reforms and could have found in the newspapers enough basic information to become reasonably knowledgeable about what was transpiring.

When one considers the tendency to resist social change, it becomes clear that many elements conspired to bring about a dramatic revolution in the educational system in Alberta in 1936 without stirring up mass resistance. In fact, the newspapers indicate that the vast majority of Albertans welcomed the changes.

The intellectual leaders of the reforms succeeded in getting their ideas into the press on a fairly regular and sympathetic basis. Although it cannot be demonstrated that the public understood the philosophy underlying the reforms, it is clear that conditions favored acceptance of the consequences of that philosophy. Furthermore, the reformers were able to harness the energy of a new brand of politicians who themselves were committed to change and who took pride in receiving credit for instituting reforms that were not of their doing originally.

B. Some Directions for Further Study

Alberta's small towns and small cities published many less known newspapers. I think it would be interesting to study a representative sample of these to see if the general conclusions arrived at in this study need to be modified for the semi-rural population, who might conceivably be more conservative.

If it would be possible, other media might also be examined to obtain either corroborative or contradictory evidence.

Another study could deal with a broader examination of the urban dailies to determine their role, if any, in other social change over a much longer period. Isolating one year and one area may not necessarily be indicative of a general direction.

Every province of Canada experienced educational reforms of a nature somewhat similar to that of Alberta in 1936. Comparative study of educational movements throughout the country might prove valuable. Studies are proceeding on a great number of fronts on Canada's social and educational developments. Sooner or later a synthesis should emerge, helping us to understand the nature of the Canadian identity by seeking the commonalities within our experience.

A final suggestion as a field of further study would be a thorough examination of the A.S.T.A. convention in early February in Calgary. It seems to me that the entire process would reveal some striking dynamics as power and prestige changes hands.

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